



1834

Makanna; or Land of the Savage Vol II

N/A

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MAKANNA;

OR, THE

LAND OF THE SAVAGE.

" I have seen Society under new forms,
And Nature as at her birth."

ROSE'S LETTERS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA.

" 'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow,
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image."

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE.

Second Edition.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR WHITTAKER AND CO.,

AVE-MARIA LANE.

C. Whittingham, Tooks Court, Chancery Lane.

MAKANNA ;

OR THE

LAND OF THE SAVAGE.

CHAPTER I.

“ Oh yes ! there is freedom and joy and pride
Afar in the desert alone to ride !
There is rapture to vault on the champing steed,
And to bound away with the eagle's speed,
With the death-fraught firelock in my hand,
The only law of the Desert Land.”

PRINGLE.

“ But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,
And there hath been thy bane ; there is a fire
And motion of the soul that will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire.”

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE.

THE wreck of the Ganges had occurred on one of the almost innumerable reefs of rock with which the coast of Southern Africa,

east of the Cape, is so environed, that it cannot be approached without danger. Some two or three open roadsteads, such as Algoa Bay, or Cape Frances, may indeed be found; but these are not only exposed to almost all the ruffian winds that blow, but are besides swept by a surf so tremendous, that a landing can only at times be effected, and then with risk and difficulty.

It so happens that with tantalizing perversity these barriers of the ocean become most inaccessible, where the climate, and other circumstances on shore, are most inviting. Thus between the Great Fish River and the Kolo, where, during the winter season, the wearisome rains, then so constant at the Cape, are exchanged for an interval of cool dry weather, steady and pleasant as an English September, and the heats of summer are chastened by transient diurnal storms from the adjacent mountains, which delightfully intermingle the breathing

freshness of a European spring, with the radiant glories of a tropical sun, it unfortunately chances that even before this Eden of the wilderness, these impediments are redoubled. The thundering surf, the rocky reefs, and changing sands, not only abound here as usual, but a new danger appears in the immense quantity of forest timber which, having been carried into the sea by mountain torrents, is continually beating about in the wild eddies of the surf, and crashing together, seems the scattered fragments of a stranded navy.

Under these circumstances, the despair of Vernon for the safety of Miss Falkland appeared but too well warranted, and the cool dexterity with which, at a certain state of the tide, and with merely the assistance of a loose raft, constructed of spars and casks, Laroon had contrived to convey his four surviving companions to the shore, excited his admiration, not less than the un-

embarrassed gaiety of the latter awakened his curiosity.

To shrivel away, as living mummies, on the parching sands of the Desert, or to linger on the storm-beaten shore, chance fed, like wandering apes, on stranded shell-fish, or the green shoots of bamboos, might certainly be more pleasant alternatives than to feast, *in propria persona*, the shovel-snouted sharks of the Indian Ocean;—but still the better expedient left Vernon in the dark as to any adequate reason for the joy with which Laroon acknowledged that to obtain a landing on that savage strand, had been, even previous to the late tornado, the leading object of his wishes.

Too well amused, or perhaps, too studious to attend to politics, Vernon had little heeded the rumours prevalent in India, before his departure, relative to the discontented state of the Colony at the Cape, where the authority of the English, after their sudden conquest

of the country, at the rupture of the peace of Amiens, was not as yet indured by the old Dutch settlers, without fierce, though smothered heart-burnings, exasperated by frequent inroads from the savage hordes of the interior. To Laroon, on the other hand, every such whisper was fraught with momentous interest. 'This man of dark imaginings,' to use the phraseology of Vernon, was, as has been already hinted, one of those confidential agents, which the policy of the French government then deemed it necessary to scatter near the Asiatic possessions of the English, for the purpose of fostering those feelings of discontent, which the subdued Rajahs so naturally entertained, and to mould to the utmost advantage any accident that might serve to embroil them in a renewed struggle with their conquerors.

As the guests of potentates, who still retained individual, if circumscribed sove-

reignty, the situation of such diplomatic agents, was totally free from the imputation of treachery. Yet although not in the degraded condition of spies, these individuals, who were always selected for versatility of talent, were expected to keep their real purpose as much out of sight as possible, and to shrink from no expedient their ingenuity could devise, as likely to promote the object of their mission.

In secret services of this nature, the reputation of Laroon was well established, and the pecuniary advantages, direct and indirect, attending them, would have left him at this period master of no inconsiderable fortune, had it not been for that unthrifty propensity, the love of change.

It was this thirst for adventure, which, in the present instance, had hurried him from India, and that at the very moment when his growing ascendancy at a native court, if no

longer of political importance, was producing for himself an ample harvest of "barbaric gold."

Early habits of maritime occupation had given Laroon a peculiar facility in assuming any character connected with the profession of a sailor. That of an American Captain in the China trade, who having suffered shipwreck, was anxious to obtain a passage to Europe, seemed suited to his purpose, and it was accordingly in this disguise that he scraped that acquaintance with Captain Daker, the fruits of which we have witnessed. Not indeed that the mutiny, or its consequences had been anticipated.—No, that occurrence, as Paul truly said, originated in accident, and all that he had previously hoped for was, to obtain a landing at the Cape, when his separation from the Ganges would have been easily and honourably effected.

As the event proved, in finding himself

on shore, beyond the boundaries of the Colony, and that, in a spot so fertile, as to be scarcely ever deserted by the natives, Laroon not only anticipated the succours of hospitality, but calculated on obtaining a personal influence among the daring children of the desert, which might open the way for a correspondence with the Dutch Boors, scattered on the confines of the Colony, and ultimately lead to that general insurrection, which it had long been his ambition to excite.

In all this was matter deemed too perilous for the ear of Vernon, and that gentleman was accordingly left by his incomprehensible companion, to the bitter counsel of his own despondency. In the yet unexplored realms around, his depressed and gloomy fancy could then picture nothing that hope might build on, or indeed better than a measureless wilderness of mountain, sand, and jungle,

with ravening beasts, and perchance still more remorseless men, lurking in fatal ambush within these grim recesses.

These long indulged and moody dreamings were becoming far too oppressive, and Vernon was at last prone, as it were from mere instinct, to seek their antidote in some active exertion. Fortunately, an ample complement of such practical consolation was readily at hand.

The raft had been carried on the bosom of the advancing tide, for a considerable distance within one of the estuaries by which the rivers on this coast generally disgorge themselves. The one in question, as is indeed common with them all, had a very formidable bar seaward ; and now that the tide was out, this mighty channel, which before seemed sufficiently ample to have given exit to the waters of the deluge, appeared little more than a level reach of sand, with a paltry streamlet coursing down the centre, and

gleaming like a thread of silver between its dusky banks, until on reaching just within the bar, it expanded into one of those blue 'vleys,' or petty lakes, so frequent in the rivers of Southern Africa.

Here and there, masses of sand-stone rock, cracked and honey-combed with the washing of the waves, rose in fantastic shapes from the level strand around, and against the shady side of one of the largest, which stood above the tide-way, a sail boomed out as an awning, now sheltered Miss Falkland and her maid.

The male portion of the party were, in the meantime, laboriously employed in collecting drift-wood, for the purpose of feeding an immense fire, the smoke of which, by this time, formed a lofty pillar in mid-air, and was, as Laroon designed, likely to attract the notice of the inland inhabitants. These were naturally concluded to be altogether savages, for in the year 1817, not a single colonist was known to dwell in this remote

district:—the event, however, proved both opinions erroneous.

And now, most kind and courteous reader, suffer me to commit the gentle violence of withdrawing thy friendly attention from our forlorn adventurers; premising, however, that within the space of forty-eight hours, they were rescued from present peril, and safe under the guidance of certain retainers of the venerable Drakenstein, to whom it will anon be an especial duty to introduce thee.

Suffer me also to imp the wings of Time, so far at least as to forestall two little months in the march of our history, before we again catch a glimpse of our old friends of the Ganges.

“Belay that stun-devil clack!—Holloa, there!—shift these d—n’d, greasy, half-roasted sheep-skin hammock-cloths to leeward!—

“Blood an’ thunder! I’m smothered quick in smouldering ashes—all abroad like a

cracked egg in hot water, or a stray hog in a limekiln!—Morkel! bear a hand, boy!

“What, you chick o’ the old’un, can’t move, ey?—Dumb, dead, or stupid, there’s a rap for that frizzled knowledge-box o’ thine, shall wake thee up with a vengeance!”

And with a vengeance, indeed, a half-extinguished fire-brand, smoking and whizzing, shot through the air. Now Morkel, the poor little Hottentot, at whose head the red-hot missile had been thrown, in lieu of being either dumb, or stupid, was ’cute as the cad of an omnibus. With the celerity of an Italian scaramouch, the youngster’s whole body, as the danger threatened, was at once curled up round as a hedgehog, within the woolly folds of the ‘carosse,’ on which he was before crouching; but no sooner was the sparkling mischief past, than, starting up naked, and with a significant glance at the two aged men, his fellow herdsmen, whose

loud conversation in the snorting vehemence of their native dialect, had, by the by, given half the offence, he hurried off to perform the behest of his master.

Yea, 'Master,'—for be it known, gentle reader, that our quondam acquaintance, Stunted Mic, the ruffian mutineer of the Ganges, was now a man in authority.

Of all the votaries of economy, political or domestic, none has a more handy trick of dispensing employment, and turning all things the useful side outwards, than your inland Boor of the Cape. Yea, verily, and no magician of the olden time, however potent, could effect stranger transformations by the shadowy familiars of his circle, than your indolent Boor will create among the new comers, and bondsmen of his household.

He will make your wandering, half-cracked, spiritual spouter, perform the laudable but stationary functions of a school-master; and even on a pinch, turn the goggle-eyed enthu-

siast into a tailor! who—(Ah, degradation most profane!)—must at once forego the lofty contemplations of his high vocation, to regard the nether habiliments of sinful flesh—or receive a certain ‘call,’ to prick his fingers.

Hugo Drakenstein was not a wit behind the keenest of his compeers in this useful accomplishment; and no sooner had his eyes fallen on the aforesaid Stunted Mic, than he resolved to make him useful at a safe distance! and by giving him the command of some Hottentots, who were watching an absent herd, to turn even his savage propensities, like those of a wolf-dog, to advantage.

The bluff seaman was now installed in the full honours of his appointment, and withal on active service. The night was advanced, and of the fire around which the herdsmen were wont to sleep and watch by turns, nothing remained save a heap of burning embers. Now between watching and sleeping, there is a wide difference, and as

the ex-slave dealer considered it most for his dignity, or at least for his carnal ease, he tried his skill at the latter.

Mic's couch of sheep-skins had been laid on the present occasion just within the genial glow of the embers. His face too was snugly shaded from the light. His canteen of brandy right lovingly within the fold of his arm, and all other appliances to boot ; —“ but who can control his fate,”—a villanous wind unexpectedly arose, and drifted the hot ashes from the exhausted fire so completely around the selfish sleeper, that ‘en vérité,’ he had an equal chance of suffocation, or baking.

“ No Massa like talk’ee,”—said the naked Morkel, slyly taking a station within the warm air from the fire,—“ No talk’ee, no wak’ee!—no wak’ee come kill’ee !”

“ Come what ? ”—shouted Stunted Mic, starting to his feet amid a shower of wood-

ashes, white as a miller, and half blinded to boot.—“Come what?”

“Come kill’ee!”—responded the boy, in a low guttural tone, but smiling, with the most provoking *sang froid*.

“What a squall,”—cried Mic, attempting in vain to look through his smarting watery eyes,—“Danger, ey?”

“Harkee, Morkel, my lad,” (in a coaxing tone) “if any of those same bloody-jawed wild beasts come down, you three land-lubbers must form a semi-circle in the van:—Ay, an’ if a brown-skin of you all, should budge but an inch—blood an’ thunder, I’ll shoot him through the brain.

“Ay, ay,—none of your studding-sail, running fights for me—Why, what the plague should I do in a chase, without leg-way, or wind to keep step with the Dead March in Saul?”

Just at this instant, Morkel, having slyly

tipt the wink—his companions laid their faces nearly flat with the ground, and having the facility of long practice, mimicked the roar of a Lion to admiration.

“ Mercy !—Mercy !—My sinful flesh creeps already like cold, crawling, slimy earth-worms on my bones,”—ejaculated the cowardly braggart in a solemn whisper, while grasping the arm of Morkel, he deliberately placed the defenceless body of the poor boy in what he considered a direct line between himself and the ravenous beast.

“ Oh Lord !—that I should die stone-blind, like a drowned puppy :—Not a wink o’ eye-sight can I catch of th’ monster, for the salt of these d—n’d ashes !—Hush !—Lord be merciful ! that growl was further off—Perhaps the beast will take his choice of an ox, or suck the warm blood of a fat heifer.

“ Hist !—No !—Morkel,”—still retaining the boy with a grasp of iron—“ If the beast should nab thee, child, will it not be a gorge for his ugly maw, ey ? ”

“ No, Massa,—me safe !—Him nebber like greasy Hottentot, when white man by—Him nab de Massa !—Tear, tear !—Rip, rip !—Pick ebery bone, den granch all de joints like de almond nut !—den roll de head in de dust, cause long-hair puzzle big-teeth !”

A hurried snappish growl just at this juncture seemed to indicate, that the Lion was moistening his jaws for the banquet.

“ Oh !—Murder !—Murder !—By Gosh, there’s one chance left !—life’s sweet, and every joint of my poor toes shall scorch and crackle, like roasted chestnuts, before I’ll ’dure the like o’ that !”

‘ Ah, thou restless ghost of the murdered Skipper, whom the fiendish art of this wretch, with burning hot tobacco pipe, and tilting plank, once tortured into eternity, it had been almost a fair revenge, couldst thou have seen the trembling poltroon, blindly groping with straddling limbs among the smouldering embers. Scorched at every step, and

writhing with pain, as, spluttering curses, with floundering stamps he kicked aside the glowing fuel, and strove to place himself in the centre of a fiery circle, which he knew no tenant of the forest would dare to cross !’

The Hottentots owed their overseer but little favour,—still one joke is enough at a time ; and, conscious that this bear’s dancing, if longer continued, must end in total lameness, they threw some skins over the sparkling embers, and, by that sort of bridge, easily approached ; and, with the assurance that the foe had retired, got the discomforted varlet into cooler quarters.

For two long hours did Stunted Mic shed any thing but penitential tears, for the smarting of those antipodes, eyes and feet, had rendered the profane dog even worse company than usual. At last, the irritation from the alkaline of the wood ashes having subsided, and his courage been renovated

by two or three hearty swigs of brandy, the quondam 'Hero of the Spanish Main' summoned sufficient fortitude to look about him !

Far to the right, beneath a sky of deepest azure, without a cloud, and moon-less, but radiant still, with an army of bright stars, that seemed like angel eyes to watch a slumbering world, dimly luminous, lay the now still waters of the Indian Ocean. Within the white foam-scattered margin of the strand, stretched in circling sweep, an undulated range of sand hills, dusky with brush-wood, and forming a graceful fringe to a broad expanse of champaign country, consisting principally of herbage, but, here and there, dotted with park-like clumps of the feathery mimosa, and streaked with patches of a faint blue and silvery sheen, where the river pools reflected back the sky.

Immediately around the elevation from which this landscape was discovered, arose

fantastic groups of precipitous hills. Some lying seaward, were altogether crowned with timber of the noblest growth ; others, belted half way up with a dark green foliage of underwood, towered high beyond, in barren conical heads, or peaked and craggy cliffs, gray, cold, and desolate. Towards the interior, in vague and shadowy perspective, were seen the ill-defined outlines of the primeval mountains, grouped in wild disorder, and, from their stratified formation, in the faint distance presenting dreamy images of strange stupendous ruins, as it might be, of some forgotten world—vast rifted pinnacles rising from seas of vapour, over-arching buttresses, and hollow chasms of a thousand shapes, receding from the eye in sullen grandeur.

On this romantic picture, the sombre hues of night hung with a cold and dim obscurity ; but still, so meekly were the heaviest shadows blended, and the rudest

outlines softened in the deep aerial concave, that a sweet serenity, full of holy musings, stole on the mind, and the hushed spirit drank in the inspiration of the hour, until the wild solitude might seem to whisper praise.

Alas, no such laudable ideas employed the thoughts of Stunted Mic; and, indeed, no single feature in the landscape was, to him, worth a moment's notice, save a petty nook that we have not observed.

Some few miles to the left, where the hollow dell, between those brown woody hills, is narrowed to a gorge, and the river forms one of those sedgy pools, called "Zeekoe-gatten," or sea-cow-holes, from their being frequently the haunts of Hippopotami, you may perceive a spot still darker than the pool. This dry and wholesome air is, indeed, clear as crystal, or we should not be able to discern that shapeless mass, which seems a detached rock, but which, in fact,

is the fortified dwelling of that wealthy boor, part Border, Smuggler, — part Herdsman, Hugo Drakenstein, while the plot of land around it is only darker than the rest, because the vegetation which covered it has been fired, lest it might afford concealment to an enemy.

The house might, indeed, cheat the eye at a nearer view, for the lofty mud wall with which it is encompassed, is so confounded and imbedded with the half-burnt but still rooted trunks of the ancient trees, formerly growing on the spot, and which have been left to strengthen it; and pierced so irregularly with loop-holes for musketry, that it has more the aspect of a druidical mound, half mouldered away by time, than any thing produced by the handicraft of man.

By allowing the eye to rest for a short time on this dusky spot, a slender trace of smoke might be discovered drifting off towards a forest in the rear, and on this little cloud

was it that all the faculties of Stunted Mic were now concentrated.

That smoke he knew full well arose from the cooking-house, (always a separate appendage to an African's domicile) and its presence at this late hour bore indubitable evidence, that no ordinary supper had been served. Now friend Mic, with the gorge of a shark, and all the dainty cravings of an alderman, had been following his vocation in the wilderness for three entire days, with no better fare than stringy dried mutton, without salt, a scanty supply of brackish water, and a most uncharitably small allowance of brandy.

How then were the mortified inward appetites of the man perturbed, when, in waking dreams, he beheld the well-beloved Kurry he could not taste, served round in ample potations by the delicately white hands of the fair sleek Jewdeth, who, on such occasions, was wont to do the honours of the

house.—Not that fictitious hodge-podge, be it especially remembered, which under the name of Curry, the oilmen and cooks of London so glibly foist upon their customers, but the genuine favourite of the East, a well-condensed stew of fowl, veal, or any other choice viands, rendered warm by red pepper and ginger, and delicately flavoured with the fragrant cucumber and fresh tamarind. And then, again, the fancy of the half-famished sailor yearned so potently towards an imaginary mess of delicious “Sambal,” that his mouth watered, and his very jaws began to move, as if engaged in an earnest mastication of its crisp gherkins and savoury anchovies.

Human enjoyments, though fair in promise, are too often like cankered roses, beautiful in the bud, but fading before they can expand; and those splenetic old maids, the Fates, will not even spare the shadowy blisses, with which poor mortals are feign to cheat themselves into forgetfulness. How often are the

golden dreams of a lover broken by the discordant cry of "Dust-ho," or the monotonous chant of the poor little sweep!—and Mic's visionary banquet was no less unceremoniously dissipated.

"Whoo-ha! Whoo-ha! Whoo-ha!"—resounded with an ominous croak from the extended jaws of the three Hottentots in regular gradation, while the farthest stretched out his thin arm towards the west, and all remained with their eager eyes fixed in the same direction, like so many exorcised spectres crouching on a grave.

"What—ho!"—shouted Stunted Mic, as he brought his loaded carbine to a poise, and looked around with affected boldness for some dread shape of danger, but rejoiced beyond measure that he could not discover any.

"By the beard of Pharaoh!—you greasy black-chopped baboons, but I'll teach ye to 'Whop-baa' me out of all lawful rest and pleasure."

So saying, he moved off with the full intention of bringing the heavy butt-end of his piece in no very friendly contact with the shoulders of the nearest;—Mic had, however, forgotten the impediment of sore feet, and before he had hobbled a dozen steps, the Hottentots were beyond his reach.

“ So ho !—Massa no beat,—Massa see, Massa !”

“ What ?—you tawny imp o’ the black-un, —see what ?”

“ See, Massa !”—replied Morkel,—“ dair de massa come, all de gallop,—clap—rap—clap—rap !”—lifting his elbow and hand swiftly up and down alternately, to give the idea of the boundings of a horse,—“ someting berry bad,—Massa ride like duyvil !”

“ Plague on’t, I can’t see anything :”—said the pacified Michael,—“ what the deuce can the boy mean ?”

Before an answer could be given, the usual cry of alarm, “ Whoo-ha ! Whoo-ha !”

was repeated by the Hottentots ; and at the same instant, a single red spot, scarcely larger than a star, became visible on the western side of one of the most distant hills. In rapid succession, the same sort of beacon-fire arose from those more in advance, until the last blazed up within the distance of eight or nine miles.

“ Ay ! ay !—I’ve learnt the trick of those same false lights before to-day,”—cried Stunted Mic,—“ those bloody-handed pirates, the ‘Bosjesmans,’ are on the wrong tack, if they expect me to lie to for a broad-side of poisoned arrows.

“ Plague on’t, no bad joke this turn up, either, if th’ ballast don’t shift with the strain. Heave a hoy—merrily, ho !—you jolly yellow-hides, you. Get the cattle under way in a jiffy ; and hark’ee, boys, I’ll signal convoy for a thundering scud on th’ homeward run. But where’s that same horseman, ey ?”

The extraordinary power of vision pos-

sessed by the Hottentots is a fact so generally known, that it need scarcely be remarked, that the moving object in question had long been visible to Morkel and his dingy companions, before their worshipful Master had the most remote chance of a glimpse. By this time, however, the distance was much lessened, and when the boy again pointed to where the inclined plane of a long hill formed a sharp outline on the horizon, the old sailor could readily discover the diminutive figure of a horseman, hurrying forward with fearful rapidity.

The distance was still considerable, and, had it not been for the purity of the atmosphere, and that the unknown rider was traversing the extreme ridge of the eminence, with only the clear blue star-lit sky behind him as a back ground, he had been still to European eyes invisible.

“Thou’st be a famous look-out at sea, boy,”—shouted Stunted Mic,—“there’s a

sail in the offing, certain sure, and staggering under a devilish press of canvass.

“ Come, spank along,—don’t spare for whip or goading, if the cattle hang astern !— And hark’ee, Morkel, lad ! untedder that there dummel of horse flesh, ‘ blind bob,’— for the deuce a single cable length budge I a-foot.”

CHAPTER II.

“ Heaven is in his mouth,
As if he did but only chew its name ;
And in his heart ” ———

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

“ Our affairs cry haste ! and speed should answer it :
You must hence to-night ! ” —

OTHELLO.

IN nothing does an Englishman more frequently commit himself, than when he ventures to pass a judgment on the domestic character of a foreign people.

The Colonists, or, as they are usually termed, perhaps with no very complimentary

intention, the “Boors” of Southern Africa, have something to complain of here!—People seem to think that, because these good fellows are of Dutch origin, that it is, forsooth, their especial duty to preserve all the smug decorum, and earthenware cleanliness, that presides in the water-laved streets of Amsterdam.

Now, it unfortunately happens, that the ‘Africander’* of the interior seems delightfully innocent of any idea, that those heterogeneous particles of matter, vulgarly denominated “dirt,” can anywhere prove injurious, except when lodged about the barrel, touch-hole, or lock of his favourite “roer.” But albeit, courteous and most forgiving Reader, let not thy wrath boil over, even here; for, as thou knowest, water is always sufficiently scarce in every part of Africa: and those who have witnessed the instan-

* Local term for the Cape-born Dutchman.

taneous transformation of fluid into vapour, which often renders a towel a need-not in the thirsty atmosphere of that fire-breathing climate, will duly appreciate the hint so kindly given by Mahomet, that 'sand,' on occasion may be used as a substitute.

Our second general head, "Decorum," even in the estimation of an Africander, implies matter far more essential. Nothing indeed can be more solemnly discreet and *silently* wise, than your affluent Boor when smoking:—or more pompously stupid, than the same sinful skin full of mortality, when under the somniferous charm of the spin-text sermon, for which their stiff-necked preachers are sufficiently remarkable.

But, must we confess?—must we indeed reveal the blooming form of Truth, as those sad dogs the painters, in their shameless audacity, are wont to draw her, without even the skulk of a cimar!—Then verily, the

Decorum of your Africander, is the sublimity of fudge!

Drop in among them just after a sale, or at a christening, when that grand specific for human ills, the "Soopie" has well anointed the animal clock-work within, and you shall find them singing, rattling, and roaring, kissing the 'Vrouw,' and touzling the girls, with an activity and zest, which would have rejoiced even the merry heart of the "merry monarch."

Or to take them in another mood. Choose a *safe* post in the jungle, when the spirit of the hunt is in the ascendant,—and you shall own their reckless, daring, and savage whoop, as deluged in blood, and dimly seen amid a stifling storm of smoke and fire, they bring the mighty Elephant to the dust,—might even shame "the wild Huntsman of the Harts," with his demon troop to boot.

"But to fall to something of more serious

import," the more unpleasant eccentricities with which the Africander has been reproached, and perhaps but too justly in some instances, may be accounted for, if not excused from the influence of the circumstances around him.

Like the patriarchs of ancient days, the wealth of these people consisteth in mighty droves of oxen, and countless flocks of sheep. But here the resemblance hath an end, for in the grazing peregrinations of these lowing baaing multitudes, from one un-inclosed track of pasture to another, they are tended by Hottentot servants or Malay slaves, almost without the "Meester's" care or notice, who, in the absence of all employment, naturally grows indolent.

Again, living too remote from any neighbour to feel the wholesome restraints of society, and desirous of governing the abject swarm that await his bidding, in the shortest way—

he is too apt to grow imperious, if not a tyrant.

Again, subject to sudden attacks, from that strange diminutive predatory race the 'Bosjesmans,'—who lurk in the mountain caverns, and impervious jungles, and who, in the possession of their consummate craftiness and deadly poisoned arrows, find an equivalent for strength, with such a foe,—is it strange that the Africander may be sometimes prone to revenge?

If there is much in all this to brutalize—it may fairly be ascribed to the Inland-Boor, as a merit, that, corresponding instances of atrocity are comparatively scarce. And on the other hand, there is a redolence of life—a luxuriant beauty mixt with a stern sublimity in the natural scenery of this remarkable country, which, with any due restraint of moral principle, may fortify and purify the mind.

Religious opinions must of course have a very important influence on characters so far predisposed ; and it unfortunately happens, that the harsher dogmas of the Church of Geneva, have been long most zealously enforced in that land by men, who, however loud against the vanities of a country-hop, or “ the vile squeaking of the wry-necked ” violin—were totally indifferent to the conversion of their heathen neighbours, among whom, the English Missionaries have since been of such important service ; and who once too, as Lichtenstein very properly observes, did their best to discourage the amiable Moravians, whose good deeds in civilizing the Hottentots, were already before them.

With so much to nurture the dreary vagaries of a moody imagination, instances of fanatical enthusiasm are of course not unfrequent, and although in some cases carried to the very pathos of absurdity, yet it must be confessed, that in this country, where men live so easily,

as not to be tempted to prostitute religion to a trade, the delusion, however preposterous, is generally as honest, as it is romantic.

This independence as to the common necessities of life—and romance of circumstance and scenery, has also had its influence in matters of a very different character. It has rendered the lawless profession of a Freebooter in Southern Africa, much on a par with that of the “forest outlaw” of the gothic age in England, rather than with that of the skulking bandit, or paltry robber of modern Europe.

The political situation of the Cape has also had some influence here. The jealousy naturally existing among the old Dutch Settlers, towards their new English masters, in some instances, added the incentive of patriotism to the adventurer’s inherent love of a wandering life. Such was eminently the case with that ally of the Amakossæ, the far famed Conrad Bugs:—And such an apology

was very convenient at least, to some more ordinary Freebooters, such as the two Blooms, and the bastard Hottentot Africanus.

These choice spirits, the “merrie men” of the wilderness, be it also remembered, enjoyed the sports of the chase to their hearts’ content, and, like the “Moss-Troopers” of the Scottish border, had also the more substantial advantage of a snug profit on all contraband articles, in which they were the sole dealers, if we except Van Riesbeck, and our new friend Hugo Drakenstein, whose cloak for a little private practice was of a still more modest texture.

All the aforesaid motives had doubtless their proper influence on the character of Hugo Drakenstein, but being a man of consummate prudence, he took especial care to indulge his irregular taste for the *romantic*, with as little scandal as possible. In the Colony, the name of Hugo was known, indeed far and wide, but it was principally as a

mighty salesman of Amakossena cattle. How he got so many together nobody inquired, and as for the depredations which commonly occurred in the track he happened to travel in his way to Cape Town, they were invariably charged to the half-tamed 'Bosjesmans,' who followed his cortage, and whom in pure high-dutch he was wont most *piously* to curse as "the infidel children of perdition." Nay, if the Demon of Inquiry was not to be laid with such *seemly* ejaculations, friend Hugo had a very convenient, significant nack, of shooting one or two of the "unbelieving vermin," as a quietus to all argument.

The homestead of Hugo Drakenstein was, as we have seen, fortified in the rude way common to houses standing in situations exposed to inroads from the natives. Within the outward wall, which was sufficiently strong and lofty to defy the assaults of any flying troop of marauders, was a sort of court, affording space for the cooking-house, and for

a number of reed huts, in which the domestics, both quadruped and biped, usually slept. The house which occupied the centre of this area, was rudely built with clay and timber, after the common fashion, except that in the instance of the outward wall, the gnarled trunks of some trees which formerly grew on the spot, were left to strengthen the building. This edifice, which bore externally the aspect of a long awkward barn, was divided into three apartments, the largest being the "voor-kamer" or sitting-room, and the other two, dormitories.

However rugged on the outside, the voor-kamer of an Africander's house has that within which may attract. Independent of the usual hospitality of the inmates, there is a promise of comfort—a wild redundancy within, which reminds you of the jovial hall of a forest-lodge in Germany, except indeed that the ample hearth, with its gigantic whizzing, crackling, blazing, smoking fire of

pine-wood, is nowhere to be found. There is, however, hunting gear of every description, and a marvellous array of dried skins. The spotted pard, and quill-defended "fretful porcupine." Weapons of almost all countries. Elephant 'roers,' or guns for shooting those manicoes of the forest, with muzzles almost large enough to swallow a cat's head; enormous powder-flasks, of buffaloe's horn; Kaffer 'hassagays,' or 'umkonetos;' and battle-axes; with the poisoned arrows and short bows of the Bosjesmans.

But the roof.—Yes! here shall you find the riches of the house! The roof is in itself a magazine that might victual out a regiment. Imprimis,—the eye is caught by a goodly row of sheep-skins, hanging aloft, and each strangely filled out, in all the due proportion of life, like one of the stuffed wonders of a museum;—and stuffed indeed they are, but with a very different intention. In these four-legged woolly receptacles are de-

posited the fat, from the tails of a whole legion of sheep. We have before gently hinted that in one particular the embonpoint of the Hottentot ladies is something remarkable, and the Cape sheep, be it also noted, carries all his fat *en derrière*. This latter natural provision constitutes to the Africander the only supply of unctuous matter that can be obtained for sundry, and all domestic uses, and without which *l'art culinaire* would be but a sorry affair. Mixed in an *elegant* confusion with these train-bearers, are ponderous heads of the golden-tinted Indian corn, many-coloured calabashes of all sizes, and a tremendous number of black, but savoury, "bill-tongues," obtained from the haunches of the spring-bok antelope, with pendent chains of spicy beef sausages.

The furniture is equally odd in its way. Chairs jointed out of lengths of thick bamboo, with bottoms formed of interlaced straps of ox-hide. Tables of ponderous iron-wood,

or sumach, which it would take a couple of men to lift; a churn, and a strange wooden convenience, used for washing, in the shape of a huge pestle and mortar; jars for holding milk, of ill-baked clay, and nearly as big as those of the Forty Thieves; and here and there too may be seen some costly bit of European finery, bought at Cape Town. Tea-caddies and tea-boards from Birmingham, with their vivid paintings and tawdry gildings, with perhaps a well-stuffed sofa, already compressed with a convenient hollow by the portly 'Vrouw;' or a French work-table, with the story of Susanna and the Elders, inlaid in ivory, for the buxom young ladies, her daughters.

In all such worldly goods and chattels the wealthy Drakenstein was amply endowed. But what have we to do with such non-essentials, when the politic Dutchman is himself before us?

The 'voor-kamer' is still hot, and reeking

with the savory steam of stews, and other delicacies, served at the just concluded supper, and so densely does the vapoury incense gather, that it almost obscures the flaring lamp at the upper end of the hall, where sits old Hugo, listening to the evening readings from the Scriptures.

Fancy a man, of something more than sixty,—the complexion darkened with the frequent visitations of a parching sun;—the forehead of that chest-like form said to betoken depth of intellect, but clouded with a lowering severe expression;—eyes of a wild glancing hazel, yet keen and searching;—cheeks of an extreme but not a sickly paleness, shaded with ample locks, brown almost to blackness, and as yet untarnished with a single silvery hair;—thin and almost colourless lips, compressed with studied formality, or unconsciously relaxing to a momentary curve of chilling irony,—and beneath all a

straight and stubborn beard, descending harshly to the bosom.

To the antiquity of the Bible then in use, its thickly studded binding and embossed clasps bore witness. The body of the book too evinced irrefragible traces of wear-and-tear; but what was singular, the pages of that portion containing the New Testament, seemed altogether untouched, while those relating to the Jewish conquests were battered down at their edges, soiled and rumped.

The reading of the evening was, as usual, from this favourite, though abused portion of the sacred records, and although the countenance of Hugo remained unchanged, yet as the historical details deepened in horror, and burning cities, or exterminating slaughters were the theme, it was fearful to mark the sudden tiger-like dilation of his eyes, and the impatient force with which his grasping hand clutched in the dark locks it held,

while, as leaning on his elbow, he listened in greedy absorption to the dreadful record.

The subject had also awakened feelings of inquietude, but from a very different source, in the bosom of the reader, who was indeed the meek and gentle Bertha. Gladly at first had she undertaken this apparently pious task ; but when, night after night, her sullen auditor, with mistaken zeal, confined her to one part of the sacred volume alone, and that evidently with the view of feasting his own dark passions, rather than of seeking instruction, she became fearful of the consequences, and would gladly have resigned an office, perhaps worse than useless. Often had she sued, but in vain, for permission to turn to passages of hope and mercy :—and to those heart-touching sorrows, which make us wise with mourning :—all her gentle reasonings and entreaties were defeated ; and even now, as the consciousness of evil chilled her utterance, until the words died languidly on her lips,

and at last, she left the page half ended—the disappointment of Hugo was too severe to be concealed.

“ ’Tis pity,”—said he,—“ that the young relish not the power of the word!—Nay, look not pale—thou hast been rather as a daughter, than a stranger in the house, and there is a love even to the steps of thy feet,—but thou art weak—yea, weak, exceedingly.

“ What is it yet to know,”—he exclaimed, raising his gaunt form to its full loftiness, and with a sonorous tone which struck like a trumpet blast upon the ear.

“ Is it yet to know!—that we sojourn in a land of idols!—I, even I, have made sharp the edge of the sword when the slaughter of the heathen was foredoomed!—Yea, my shout hath resounded from the rocks of the desert, when I have dragged them to the death, as a serpent from its hole!—What is it yet to know, that the infidels wax powerful in this our day!—That the Kossas have a Magician,

a Prophet, of their own, who, under the shadow of the Evil One, groweth stronger and stronger !”

“ The very matter I wanted to hear of,”—said Laroon, who, with Vernon, had been before a silent auditor of this scene.—“ Pray tell us, if this mock prophet, whom the Amakossæ call ‘ Makanna,’ or the ‘ Lynx,’ happens to be one of your acquaintance ?”

“ Ask me,”—said Drakenstein, frowning darkly, and at once dropping his voice with the lofty enthusiasm of his subject, and speaking with a low and bitter emphasis—“ Ask Hugo Drakenstein, if he will put the black scorpion in his bosom, or run to meet the enraged Elephant in his wrath !

“ Youth is without knowledge, or it need not be told, that the Evil One hath power in the wilderness !—I will barter with the Amakossæ in the way of peace ; for it is given to the faithful to get fat on the spoil of the Infidel :—but Makanna is worse than an In-

fidel!—his flesh is the outward husk of the Demon, and I will eschew him even as the pestilence!—unless indeed, as it may be, that the doomed sword be entrusted to my hand, and then would I pour out his heart's-blood on the dry sand with rejoicing!—even as I would water the melon-plant that thirsteth!

“But,”—said he, after a pause, and recovering quite his usual calmness of tone—“The child of our love becometh faint with watching.”—And then taking the hand of Miss Falkland, and leading her towards Mage, who was waiting with a lamp, he gave her the usual Dutch salutation for the night, of “wel te rusten,” (or, may you rest well), with even a tone of affection.

After Hugo had returned to his place at the table, both Laroon and Vernon essayed their best to provoke him into a conversation on a theme in which he had appeared so well versed, and so highly excited; but all their efforts were in vain. Without being

either sullen, or betraying irritation, he managed very civilly to disappoint them; and while dissecting and cleansing the lock of a gun, he led them insensibly into a discourse on the adventures of the chase, of so interesting a nature, that it kept them truants much longer than they had intended from their beds.

At last, when the deep silence of midnight reigned in the 'voor-kamer,' and the strangers, having long retired, were probably in their first sleep, while the two Hottentots, whose duty kept them within call, were most unmercifully snoring on the floor; Drakenstein beckoned to his thrifty 'Vrouw' Wilmena, who, since supper, had been unremitting at her needle.

"Come hither,"—said he,—“the matter I would speak of requires caution, and the ear is often open when the eye is closed—come hither!

“Doth not our son tarry long?—My heart

misgiveth, when I remember that Van Riesbeck is but as a beast—as a gentile to the faith. Yet, as the spies that Joshua sent from Shittim gained knowledge, and a shelter in the house of Rahab, the harlot, so may our son see the weakness, and the nakedness of the land, in the profane hostelry of that graceless drone, Van Riesbeck.”

“Yes, I’ll warrant,”—replied the spouse,—“the boy will gain a power of knowledge as to foreign wines, dancing, dice, and song-singing, for the English ‘Meesters’ there have rampant hearts, and full pockets.”

“He may drink of the cup of vanity for a blind,”—said the husband, who fancied his own dignity to be somewhat involved in the question—“but the lad will keep an open ear and a keen eye for all that. I tell thee what, Wilmena, the boy will bring the powder, and then shall we have it all our own way, for even as was the hair of his head to Samson, so is gun-powder to a colonist!

“What will your shoe-polishing, strap-claying, knapsack-loaded soldier, do in a land like this?—By the claws of Nebuchadnezzar, half a dozen marches and counter marches in the sun-parched Karoo, would leave them dried up by files into mummies, and too horny withal, for the beak of a vulture. And then for bush-fighting, keep them in play with three thousand Amakossæ ‘umkonetos,’ and three hundred Dutch-roers in sure hands to pop them off unawares from ‘kloof,’ and jungle, as opportunity serves, and they’ll be glad to let us follow the Yankee fashion yet.”

“Well!—well!”—said the drowsy absent Wilmena, then slyly pouting her coral lips into a gaping hiatus, that most men would have comprehended far better than her spouse. —“Well!—well!—would a Republic make tea cheaper?—if not, where’s the sense of wasting powder!—and as for your dry, cold, shrunken mummies, indeed”—

“ Whurr !—whurr ! ”—exclaimed both the Hottentots, in a breath, as they started on their feet, at the alarm of a sudden noise from without.

“ Dat sambok be de young Massa.—Nobody crack de whip like to him.”

The poor fellows had, perhaps, formerly received rather too many reasons to appreciate the graceful skill with which the young Drakenstein was wont to manage the ponderous lash of his sambok ; be that however as it might, their surmise was perfectly justified, as in a second, the slouched hat and ruddy face of the jolly Boor were crouching under the lintel.

“ Dear Cootje !*—you’re welcome home, lad !—and lucky too,”—said his mother-in-law,—“ to find us up so late. And have ye brought the real pekoe ?—and the handsomest chintz pattern in the whole store ?—and have ye—”

* “ Cootje,” Africander’s term for “ Jemmy.”

“Pooh! pooh!”—cried the father,—“get the boy some strong ‘tea-water,’ to slush the dust out of his throat.”

“Ay, ay, sit ye down Cootje, and while they put some fresh charcoal under the kettle, tell me, lad, an’ if you have the powder?”

“Mayhap not,”—said the son,—“for we over the Border are like to get a hot time on’t.—The waggon may be robbed on the track:—There’s a plaguy troop of dragoons at Algoa Bay.—By this time, too, the Dutch at Graaff-Reynet are all on the blow and the bounce, like musty wine, for a kick-up!—And then, the Duyvil of all! there’s the Kaffre King S’Lhambi, with a swarm of naked Kossas, flying for life before the English red-coats, with some dunder-headed Boors to help them; more’s the pity.”

“More’s the pity, indeed—but what cause had you to mention the Evil Name?”—replied Hugo, who suffered no liberty to be taken

with his Shadowy Majesty, by any one but himself.—“What, the Amakossæ cowed already!—that were a mischief indeed.—Yes! no doubt they were stirred up to this by that black wizard, Makanna!”

“No shot in the bull’s-eye that, father!—No, no, you’ll never catch the Lynx showing his teeth before he can bite!—Let him be what he will, he’s too much of a prophet for that!”

“He’s a Duyvil!”—exclaimed old Hugo, forgetting his late paternal caution.—“But has not Van Riesbeck written in the book?”

“Yes, there was something of the sort—and faith, you owe the trick of the milk to the Lynx too; but at the last ford we’d a floundering swim, and book, saddle-bags, and all went sailing together in the dark.”

“What! the powder left in jeopardy!—The written council clean miscarried!—Zounds, Cootje! you’re only fit to follow a bird and hunt wild honey, or to stand in the

shade half the day, cracking the lash of a sambok:—as for policy, or the sense of a man! I'd rather seek them in the hollow of a gourd!"

"Never shoot on a dash, father! always too high or too low. Policy, forsooth!—There might have been some on the blank leaf of that book, that would have showed up black enough in the right place!—But what o' that—who trusted me?—I've had the dog's office, to fetch and carry—and a dog's thanks too!—and that for the fault of a horse!"

"There's something in that, Cootje, but did you glean a hint?—have you a guess—did the thief, Van Riesbeck—"

"Stop, stop—you've drawn the charge, and I'll blow all clear before you'll unscrew the searcher.—Hints and guesses are but fumblers,—shooting with a long barrel and no sight. Van Riesbeck's stiff against a turn out—says, 'twould make trade hang fire.—

No pouching a dollar, if the Boors come to have a fair barter.

“But now comes the fun; Mynheer has planned a snug little decoy, and thinks to catch his neighbour’s duck with his own drake.”

“Leave your rambling shooting fooleries, and speak out, if you can!—What are ducks and drakes to me, Cootje?”

“Little enough, more’s the pity.—If our Zee-koe-gatten held but sweet water, and—”

The provoking tongue of the young royster might have rattled on to a greater length, had not the gathering storm on Drakenstein’s brow taught him, at least, the prudence of a more concise phraseology.

“Well,”—said Cootje, somewhat crest-fallen, and in an undertaker’s tone,—“the matter’s no more than this,—Van Riesbeck lodges a brace of rich English officers, that bleed as easily as lambs;—turned adrift, as

they tell, by a ship's company, who have hoisted the black flag, under one Laroon, in the Indian Ocean.—A duyvil of a fellow that!—stole the ship from the one they call Daker;—kidnapped the daughter of the other, —a rum old chap, one Major Falkland;—and yet that's not a fair twist of the story either,—for if all's true, the young slut was in the heart of the mutiny, and all for the love of that wild sea-shark, Laroon.”

—“Well, and what of that?”—said Hugo, with a stern earnestness which his son knew not how to construe,—“What of that?”

“Why, little enough, as the chance may turn:—Van Riesbeck counts for certain, that this same cocksy Rover will soon fall aboard our old friend, the Pirate of the Isles.—That the young gypsy and her wild sailor-boy may be tricked on shore, and passed over to us as easy as the turn of a song!—Then comes the decoy of the duck and the drake,—

we trap for him,—he carries the game to market for himself, and pockets the duyvil of a price, with honour to boot!—Why, the rich prig, her father, said stiff out t'other day, that he'd give a thousand hard cash to man, woman, or child, that would bring him to another look in her mealy face:—more's the luck for somebody;—and more's the pity for the fool that said it."

"A thousand!—she's cheap at a million!"—exclaimed Drakenstein, in a deep full tone of confidence; and placing his hand with a firm grasp on the giant shoulder of his son,—
"I tell thee, boy, she's worth an empire!"

"Why, that's more than the Grand Turk would bid for a whole ship's cargo of black and blue eyes at once;"—said Cootje, bewildered by his father's earnestness, and striving to meet it with a jest.

"Speak in a lower tone, the lady may be here."

“ Well, father, let me drink first, and then, mock on as long as you list,—I speak no more than I know.”

“ But I less,”—said Drakenstein,—“ Miss Falkland sleeps within !”

“ What?—Who ?”

“ Miss Falkland.”

“ Saints and Duyvils !”—shouted the son, as his unconscious hand launched the cup of steaming fluid, then approaching his lips, to the farther end of the hall, where it fell on the arm of an unfortunate Hottentot; a howl most tragical had followed, but that the fellow caught a glance of the dreaded sambok, then swung with tremendous energy for one of those thundering concussions, which were alike the signals of Cootje’s rage or joy.

“ What, would you scare the house ?”—said Drakenstein, catching his son’s arm just in time to withhold the coming report.

“ But is there no mistake ?”—replied the

young Boor, forcing off his whelming hat, as his hands pressed his temples with the vehemence of one startled from a deep slumber;—"A thousand pounds, certain!—And—but—what—where—where's the dog, Laroon?"

"The Captain sleeps in the second chamber;"—replied the father, pointing calmly towards the door.

"Then all's snug,"—said young Drakenstein,—“Captain or Duyvil, he dies!—though 'tis but cheating the gibbet either.”

On the instant, his heavy powder-flask of buffalo's horn was in requisition, a large gun was snatched from the wall, a double charge of buck-shot rammed home, the priming duly looked to, and the lock drawn to full cock.

"Yes, sleeping or waking, he dies without time for a kick!"—said the youth, as, with the knowing nod of an old sportsman, he looked in his father's face for approval.

The countenance of old Hugo wore the

calmness of a statue: the lips were compressed, as if to conceal any gleam of feeling; the usual searching spirit spoke from the eyes, and the dark locks hung heavily on the pallid cheeks, like advancing shadows on the dim bosom of a moon-lit lake.

“What,”—said the son,—“you doubt of the reward?—I’ve thought of that:—we’ll souse the head in a keg of vinegar, and so send it to Cape Town;—or, if you judge the proof better, pack the whole carcass in a cask of salt.”

“Pack your wits in a nutshell!”—said Drakenstein,—“What, you’d set the thatch in a blaze, nor leave a sinner time for the change.”

“Nay, Father, when you’re on the pious cue, the fiery Fiend may run loose, an’ he will. I tell you, the dog Laroon might swim in the blood of his own crimes!—Nonsense! I’ll do the joke first, and talk after.”

Cootje made a stride towards the door, when, with a sudden lurch, his father snatched the 'roer' from his hand, and, as he blew the priming from the pan, observed, with something like a smile,—“ The boy's witched altogether !

“ Why, Cootje, lad, would you slay a hunter bold enough to be your twin brother ? —A sportsman, too, shall pick you out the ' Zee-koe's' eye in troubled water at a long shot, five in seven, without a miss !”

“ Nay, and he'll hunt and shoot after that fashion, I'm running on a false trail,—none of your pale, cut-throat, poisoning scamps come that.—Zounds, there's a warm snake's nest of lies laid somewhere !—Van Riesbeck may crack them at his leisure, I wash my hands o' the matter.”

“ Yes, yes ! keep them clean while you can, Cootje. It becometh youth to ponder long, and listen to the voice of him who hath garnered knowledge.

“Harken, my son!—The lady you wot of is fair exceedingly!—She shall not be entrusted to the hot, wanton-eyed Van Riesbeck:—nor should the profane touch the spoil, that had fallen to the lot of the godly. And then, if the times prove evil, shall not the maiden, even as a hostage, prove a shield against the wrath of the avenger, until the thorns be gathered from the path of the righteous. But should the days of lamentation come not, and the Major, her father, set a price upon her head, then will I render her up suddenly! even as a young dove, brought down by the whirlwind, no man knoweth whence!”

“Right, Father, but the English troopers!—The wild sea-shark, Laroon!”

“Shall both be foiled:—Let there be a hunt, and you may lure the Creole to any distance. Let him but range the jungle for a day, and I’ll bring a train to bear, that shall persuade, or force Miss Falkland to

seek a refuge in the wastes of the Desert—yea, in the heart of the Karroo !”

“ But, Father, the Prophet of the Amakossæ !—Shall she, who is ‘ worth an empire !’—Shall she, who is fair, as you say, ‘ exceedingly,’ escape from the snare of ‘ the subtle one ’—‘ who hath,’ as you say, ‘ a dwelling with the serpents, that lurk in the hollow rocks of the wilderness !’

“ ‘Faith, to my mind, ’twere no better, than to bait a wolf-trap with the lamb you have fondled in your bosom.”

“ Look to thy own craft, Cootje !—Let the slaves put the hunting gear in trim ;—see, the dawn is peering on the night.”

“ But, Father, you think not of what you say,—Makanna !”

“ There is a wilfulness in youth, boy, worse than the lack of knowledge !—Thou knowest already, that the fighting men of Gaika hate that foul Manassah, even to the death !—They have made with me a league,

as thou knowest also !—Verily, they shall watch for the safety of the maiden, whom I love as a daughter:—and the songs of their virgins shall make her sojourn pleasant in the green places of the wilderness !—But be thou speedy, or the English scouts may snatch away our spoil :—yet is there an hour for rest,—get thee to bed, Cootje, sleep is as an oiled whetstone to the edge of policy !”

CHAPTER III.

“ The toils are pitched, and the stakes are set,
Ever sing merrily, merrily ;
The bows they bend, and the knives they whet,
Hunters live so cheerily.”

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

“ I wish I were as I have been,
Hunting the hart in forests green,
With bended bow and blood-hound free,
For that's the life is meet for me.”

LAY OF THE IMPRISONED HUNTSMAN.

“ DEAR me!—I shall die for want of breath
to laugh with !”

Exclaimed the dainty little Mage, as she
threw herself, in the abandonment of total
exhaustion, on the side of her lady's bed,

her plump person in a universal tremor, from the ineffective pantings with which she sought relief, and her dimpled cheeks glowing deeper than roses, with the rich carmine of recent blushes.

“ Dear me, indeed !” said her lady, in a tone of mingled apprehension and surprise, and not without a glance that implied reproof.—“ Let me entreat you to remember, Mage, that we are now under the roof of one, whom your mad-cap freaks, innocent as they are, may seriously offend. Mynheer Drakenstein is a man of singular gravity, and as his prejudices arise from religious feelings, however perverted, it is, at least, our duty to respect them.”

“ Dear me !—O yes, ma’am !—I’m sure I always take care to look as prim as a nun at confession whenever the glum old mountain-cat is in sight ; but now it’s quite another matter, and nobody has a right to complain but myself.

“ Dear me !—Whoever could have thought that such a vinegar-faced, shrivelled old piece of formality, could have had so wicked a wag of a son !”

“ Then the young man is at last returned, of whom we have heard so much,” said Miss Falkland, as, in completing her toilet, she drew the amber-tinted gauze somewhat closer, which shrouded the glistening whiteness of her bosom.

“ And is he as handsome as his sister Jewdeth represents ?”

“ Dear me, ma’am, I was so flurried, that I never saw more than one-half of him at a time.

“ The moment I found there was a strange man in the house, I cast down my eyes, and spoke in a little cooing voice ; and then I suppose he mistook me for you, ma’am, for all at once he pulled off his hat, stretched out one great heavy leg, like a dancing bear, and dropping his head all askew on the

other side, after the fashion of an owl at roost, he made me a bow, so low and so comical, that for the very life of me I could not help laughing.

“Dear me!—These he things are all full of deceit! The great calf was not half so simple as he seemed; and before I could shape my face into any serious form, he whisked me off my feet, swung me round like a kitten, threw me back on his arm, and kissed me out of breath in a minute!”

“Very strange, indeed, Mage; but almost your own fault, too.—You must be a great deal more circumspect in this rude country, or I know not what may happen.”

“No indeed, ma’am, nobody can tell,—for, dear me! this wild bear-monkey is going to take the Captain and Mr. Vernon out to hunt the Noscer-ass, I think they call it.—And there is such a clang, and such a running, pushing, and spluttering among the Hottentots: with saddling horses, hollowing

dogs, cleaning guns, and sharpening javelins, that it will give me the head-ache for a week."

Having no inclination to encounter a din, the distant rumble of which was quite sufficient for common nerves, Miss Falkland determined to remain in her chamber until the noisy rout had departed. Some other causes had also something to do with this resolution. Although perfectly aware that the respect due to herself would suffer no infraction, she thought it quite as well not to meet the younger Drakenstein for the first time while he was in so frolicsome a mood; and she was equally desirous that the coolness implied by her absence should check any vague expectations that might possibly be entertained by either Vernon or the Captain.

Not to have been conscious that she was an object of attraction, if not of positive passion, to both those gentlemen, would have

been a mere want of comprehension, and the probable embarrassments which the fact might entail could not be contemplated without feelings of inquietude.

If no fond flutter of the heart whispered a tender preference towards either of those all-but suitors, the gentle Bertha was fully sensible, that the safety with which their fraternal care had conducted her through so long a succession of perils, deserved her deepest consideration.

It was, indeed, in its division, that the sentiment of gratitude in the bosom of Miss Falkland remained sufficiently tranquil for her peace. Had she viewed her preserver alone in the gentlemanly form and frank-hearted address of the manly Vernon, her affections perhaps at once had been drawn into a focus. Or, on the other hand, had the romantic and daring Laroon stood alone, as the champion of her destiny, the rapt feelings of the impassioned girl had proba-

bly placed him too soon on the throne of her imagination.

As it was, she felt for both, sentiments of the warmest friendship; and although not too blind to discover, she was more than ready to forgive the faults of either.

Sound sense and firm principles were perhaps rather too much alloyed with a calculating coldness and suspicious reserve, on the part of Vernon; and the quick perception and generous self-devotion of Laroon, were hedged around with too many shadowy doubts, to render him a subject of very comfortable contemplation to any mind that felt an interest in his fate.

The claims, or the hopes,—she knew not which,—of her friend, Lady Frances Balmore, were also sufficient to throw a cloud of hesitation on any inclinations that might veer towards Laroon; and although she had learnt enough of his situation to feel that he might be justified in the accidental capture of the

Ganges,—yet, in the retention of herself, and her consequent separation from her father, it seemed that something like an outrage had been committed, which the ardour of his love might explain, but not excuse.

It was true, indeed, that a tenderness the most unwearied, and a delicate forbearing sense of honour, had marked the whole of his conduct towards the fair captive, while she was more immediately in his power, and he had promised to restore her to the arms of her father:—but why had she ever been torn from his bosom.

Reflections of this nature were crowding on the mind of Bertha, with an intensity leading to a sense of faintness,—when loud sobs, and conflicting voices were heard from within !

The hunting train had long departed, and as the cause of these sounds was as incomprehensible, as they were in themselves alarm-

ing, Miss Falkland naturally hurried into the 'voor-kamer.'

On her entrance, the first object which presented itself, was the squab rotundity of Stunted Mic blocking up the narrow door-way, as we sometimes see the bloated carcass of a toad, jammed, as it were, in the hollow of a chawn. Nor is the simile inappropriate in a more personal sense, for as the conceited ruffian had, as he believed, just communicated intelligence of the deepest interest, he stood with his chin thrust forward, and his swarthy cheeks puffed out, with the vague importance of an Alderman at the close of a patriotic speech.

A little to the right, where the only window (consisting, by the by, of only four paltry panes of glass) admitted the promise, rather than the reality of light, reclined, in a large well-be-cushioned chair, the still more pillowy form of the comely Vrouw. The amiable Wilmena

was, as it seemed, in a most sublime conflagration:—a fit, or something of the kind, for her head hung back all-agast, after a most inanimate fashion. Ever and anon, too, the lady's heels played off a tremendous rattoo on the unoffending floor, while in the gasping intervals of her sobs, the throttling force of her hysterical contortions gave no slight indications of that feminine malady, the “tantrams.”

Keeping with laudable caution on the safe side of these portentous nether-drumsticks, stood the still more comely form of the daughter Jewdeth, a girl of some sixteen years, but fat enough for forty, with a soft voluptuous coaxing style of countenance, that seemed altogether incapable of the slightest shadow of either grief or anger.

The task of Jewdeth was, as opportunity served, to supply the nostrils of her Mother with sundry snifts from a little blue bottle of volatile salts, and in the mean time, to summon

back the fleeting senses to a due consciousness of this sublunary scene, by certain delicate titillations, from the point of a clipped feather.

This gentle exciter, the smiling damsel, for Jewdeth had too often witnessed such scenes to entertain a shadow of fear, was even now moving in gentle strokes across the patient's quivering throat, with a dexterity that argued some former experience, in so feminine a manipulation,—while somewhat apart, in stoical serenity, or rather in sullen contempt, for a sneer of derision hung bitterly on his lip, stood Hugo Drakenstein.

On the approach of Miss Falkland, his countenance immediately assumed its wonted calmness, and in a tone of voice equally unperturbed, he proceeded to inform her, that from some signal fires which had been observed by his herdsmen on the previous night, there was reason to believe, that a considerable number of 'those vindictive and dangerous savages,' the 'Bosjesmans' had congregated

in the neighbouring country, and that, probably, with the most sinister intentions.

“But my trust,”—cried Drakenstein, swelling his voice with a hollow emphasis, as was his custom when the supposed impulse of a spiritual excitement flashed across the tenour of his thoughts.

“My trust is not in the arm of the Mighty! no, nor in the edge of the weapon, cunningly tempered, or in the death-flash of the ‘roer!’—No, the guile of the serpent shall whisper the secret of wisdom.—The seal of emptiness shall be upon the house;—the door shall be made fast;—the fire shall be quenched, so that no smoke shall arise to betray that aught living is within the walls:—Let this be so, and the blood-sucking vermin will depart, as a vulture turneth aside from the dry bones that are bleaching on the desert.”

“Oh, lack-a-day!”—cried the Vrouw, starting to her feet with marvellous facility,—“Oh, lack-a-day! that I should be mocked with a

windy boast, when the arrows are being smeared in the poison that will fester in our bosoms !

“ No fire !—Oh, yes, I trow, but there will be more than enow, when the ugly naked short-legg’d thieves have left the cattle-‘kraal’ all crackling in a glow, and their goads are plying hard in the sore flanks of the oxen, poor dumb creatures, as they drive them away from their own lawful home, to starve on the stony ridges of the mountains.”

“ My head to a swabber’s mop, but the old girl might palaver it out with the biggest wig on the bench !”—growled Stunted Mic, in his native lingo, as the sentence was addressed to Miss Falkland.

“ For the love of Heaven, and our own sweet lives, my Lady dear ! be after persuading that tall-boy canting Lubber, to show à little fight,—or at least to fire minute guns of distress—and then, as sure as th’ Steward’s a rogue, should we have Captain Laroon scudding down in a cloud of fire to the salvation of us all !”

As if in deference to the expostulation of his wife, but in reality, to forward his own secret purpose, Drakenstein now changed the ground of his advice; and on the specious plea that there would be perfect safety, if they were to leave the house and follow in the track traversed by the hunting party of the morning, he directed that the travelling waggons should be prepared.

A scene of the utmost bustle and confusion ensued, for the alarm of the Vrouw was boundless, and the Hottentots were delighted with the idea of exchanging the chance of being pricked to death with poisoned arrows, for the stirring excitement of a journey. Two of the narrow tilted waggons, which are indeed the only sort of vehicle used in the interior of Southern Africa, were appropriated for the conveyance of the family; and into these "ships of the desert," tents, bedding, arms, and ammunition, were liberally stowed; but as Bertha afterwards remembered, with no very

grateful feelings, much more than an equal proportion of these stores was assigned to the waggon devoted to her use. To this carriage was also attached that redoubtable hero, Stunted Mic, who had so far imposed on old Hugo, as to be considered a man of infinite valour. Four of the youngest and more intelligent Hottentots were also made "part and parcel" of this especial cortage, and such an additional number of oxen allowed for the draught of the waggon, and of saddle horses, for the escort, that, had not Miss Falkland been a perfect stranger in the land, her suspicion had very naturally been awakened.

As it was, no attention was paid to anything but the rapidity with which the fit-out could be effected; and the thrifty Vrouw handed over dried flesh, and fruits, with spirits, flour, and wine, sufficient for the victualling of a West-Indiaman, without being conscious that she was doing anything more than preserving her "precious substance from

those ravening, murdering vagabonds, the Bosjesmans."

At length, everything was in due order; the patient oxen slouching their shoulders to the harness, as if anticipating the signal for the start; the Hottentot drivers flourishing their long whips in the air, and at the same time not a little proud of their new high-crowned broad-brimmed straw hats, and round jackets of pink cotton, served out for the occasion; while the boys employed to lead the first pair of oxen, in ravines and other difficult parts of the track, began cracking their samboks, until the dust might have smothered a caravan, and the reports were sufficiently loud to have merited the attention of even that profound proficient in the sublime art of sounding a lash, "Meester" Cootje himself.

As a complimentary, and no uncommon finish to this African equipage, the venerable standard of 'old Holland' was affixed to

the stern of Drakenstein's vehicle ; while, in honour of Miss Falkland, the Union-Jack of the ' Ocean Queen ' was hoisted with a thundering cheer by Stunted Mic. By this time, Drakenstein had given the usual signal by firing in the air,—a ceremony followed by his dependants with so much rattling avidity, as to convey no mean idea of a skirmish ; and the cavalcade was at once in motion.

The mere fume of the gunpowder seemed to re-inspire the timid Vrouw with due conjugal confidence in the valour of her spouse ; shouts and volleys of merriment were exchanged between the horsemen and little Mage, as she sat foremost, fanning her mellow charms with a plume of ostrich feathers, like an Indian princess in the houdah of an elephant, was heard to call it " the happiest day of her life."

Now there are, at least, twenty reasons, why the waggon train of an Africander must be pleasing to a woman.—Imprimis, the

easy domesticity of the capacious vehicle; for, notwithstanding its homely appellation, it is just the thing for the country; fixed together in such a way (in part with leather thongs,) as to allow the necessary play to relieve the ruggedness of the road, with substantial shelter from sun and storm; and it is picturesque withal, in its long narrow form, large powerful wheels, and the knowing rake of its double tilt.

Secondly, the—But suppose we leave the other nineteen most grave and cogent reasons, as the puritanical divines were wont to say, “for a more convenient season,” and seek a glimpse of our friend Cootje, and his “merrie troop.”—Not that hunting in Southern Africa has ought to do with the thoughtless hilarity of an English fox-chase:—no,—there is excitement, and to spare, but of a very different character; the thrill of anticipated danger, and the consciousness, that whoops of victory may end in groans and death.

For three hours, already, had our party been in the field, without as yet having reached the district where there was any chance of finding the noble game they sought.

Having passed the sand hills, and skirted a forest adjacent to the house of Drakenstein, they were now traversing one of those extensive plains, which are so common a feature in the more fertile portions of Southern Africa. The troop consisted of six individuals, each mounted on one of the native horses, a race which happily unites the capacity for labour and patient endurance of the Cossack breed, with the fine bone and symmetry of the Asiatic. One half of the party were Hottentots, who, with some dozen of half-bred dogs of the lurcher kind, formed the vanguard.

Among these, a very old but still powerful man evidently took the lead. Although not so much encumbered with warlike baggage as his companions, he had quite enough to give

him a most formidable aspect. His camel-like shoulders were crossed by two broad belts, to one of which hung the small pole-axe sort of hatchet, used for cutting out the tusks from the skulls of the elephants that may happen to be shot, and a gigantic powder-flask of buffalo's horn ; while to the other, was attached a leathern bag for the conveyance of wild honey, and a horn of ample dimensions charged to the nozzle with brandy. A goatskin of water, with the legs tied short, and sticking out most grotesquely, hung at the saddle-bow, which also bore the weight of a blunderbuss sort of ' roer.'

In other respects, the outward man of old Gaspal might equally attract attention. His knees were bare, the trousers being reeved up above them, and the legs below wound round with the fresh intestines of a sheep, which experience has proved the best defence from the teeth of serpents. A loose

jacket of white duffle, albeit stained with certain crimson badges from his savage vocation, contrasted well with the light olive of his scraggy neck, and his black mustache, while the keen intelligence of the deeply sunken eyes, that glistened with the eager glances of a wild cat, from beneath the dark shadow of his slouching hat, showed him a fit guide to the secret haunts of the forest.

Apart in all due aristocratic dignity, rode "Meester Cootje," the lord of the field! He too, as is common with the young Africanders, was especially equipped for the toils and perils of the day:—viz. a dark-blue linen shirt, leaving the arms naked, and closed around the bare and muscular throat with a massy silver broach of antique workmanship, pantaloons of the former material, supported by a black and shining leathern waist-belt, to which a cutlass was slung, while a shot-pouch and highly polished powder-flask sus-

pended from the shoulder, and a crimson kerchief worn in Malay-fashion, as a turban, completed the costume.

His 'roer' was entrusted to one of the Hottentots, until it might be wanted; and, strange to say, so far had the young Drakenstein forgotten himself, that his very sambok was stuck in his waist-belt, by the handle, as something useless. Cootje had indeed quite enough to do to answer the questions with which Laroon was then plying him with no common avidity; while Vernon hung rather aloof, as if lost in the contemplation of the landscape.

"What!"—said Laroon, as he drew a note-book from the breast-pocket of the black velvet shooting-jacket, worn in honour of the day, and sketched the outlines of the Kaloche Mountains, with the dexterity of a practised draughtsman.—"What, the 'Umzi,' or village, in which this wonder-working Makanna now sojourns, lies within that moun-

tain-gorge, a day's journey to the north of that blue peak you call the Giraff's Head?"

"Exactly so!"—replied Cootje, with a nod of affirmation.

"And a stranger should always keep those three hills on the right at an equal level above the horizon?"—rejoined the Creole, as with the assistance of a pocket compass, he carefully marked down the bearings on his paper.

"Yes, to a certainty!—but I've forgotten—

"Zounds! Gaspal's caught a sight!—Yoaks! forward! forward! we'll have rare sport anon."

With this exclamation the young Boor gave his horse an open-handed slap on the flank, that resounded like a double-drum, and in a moment he was galloping pêle-mêle with the Hottentots in the van.

Vernon caught the excitement, and hurried on, but Laroon remained strangely in the

rear. It might be to conclude his sketch, but if so, this was not all. Unlike the rest of the party, the Captain had a second horse hanging on his arm, and it was afterwards remembered by Cootje, that, when looking back he had observed him shifting some bags of ammunition and flasks of brandy, to the saddle of this spare horse, which, by the by, was one of the most fleet and powerful the country could produce; such matters adjusted, he too pressed forward.

The plane they were traversing had what English settlers love to call 'a parkish appearance;' that is, it was dotted over with innumerable clumps of mimosa, all so neatly trimmed off into a circular form, by the nibbling of the vast flocks of antelopes, which pass over these districts in occasional migrations, that they might readily have been mistaken for artificial plots of low shrubs. The intervals were filled up by the rank breast-high guinea-grass, and as the ground

beneath and out of sight, was every where more or less hollowed with the burrows of the ant-eater, and the porcupine, this riding at random, through an ocean of herbage, was no laughing matter to those who regarded the fall of a horse, as anything more than a pleasant excitement.

‘Meester’ Cootje and his retainers had, accordingly, sundry headlong pitches, and sidelong lurches, which, although not actual tumbles, were far more comic to a spectator, than satisfactory to the parties engaged. Being on this occasion strangely deficient in his usual sportsman-like zest, Laroon’s whole attention seemed devoted to avoid such unlucky mishaps, and therefore allowing the reckless rout before to trample down a track through the grass, he picked a road for his horses with no common care ; and as the poor animals themselves seemed perfectly awake to the danger of broken legs, his laudable caution was seconded with sedulous sagacity.

After an uneasy gallop of this sort, for some six or seven miles, with no foretoken of sport in view, to an European eye at least, although the more acute vision of the Hottentots had, from the first, detected the most promising indications, Gaspal all at once brought the whole party to a halt, by reining in his steed so suddenly, that the animal was thrown completely on its haunches, while the rider, standing in his stirrups, stretched out his gaunt and bony form to the utmost, and as he eagerly gazed beyond, hissed out from between his protruded teeth, the half-suppressed exclamation of—

“ Uitkyk !—Uitkyk ! ”—(look out ! look out !)

As the surrounding bushes were here unusually close and high, no other person could at the moment obtain a glimpse that might explain the caution ; and it was with no little difficulty, that Laroon at last urged his unwilling horse through the thorny

mimosas sufficiently far to make himself master of the circumstances before them.

Having at last obtained a post of vantage, but still behind an impervious rampart of brushwood, he perceived that they were upon the confines of one of those wild forests, which almost invariably skirt the wide and broken hollows, through which the rivers of Southern Africa find their course. Immediately beneath the eye, a precipitous 'kloof,' or woody ravine, presented amid the shadowy recesses of the magnificent foliage, which clothed its banks, a thousand varied forms of strange luxuriant vegetation glowing in the golden brightness of eastern day. The view was, indeed, one that might have entranced a painter, but all its attractions were unheeded in the deep interest, and almost sense of present danger, which one of its features excited,—the recent track of a troop of Elephants.

As if, in the wantonness of their power,

these monsters of the wilderness had here marked out their path with a semicircular sweep, that past immediately through a spot, where the trees had grown strongest and thickest, and it was a fearful thing to witness the devastation which registered their course.

The more succulent shrubs and plants of the jungle were not only trampled down into the sandy loam, but such trees as the 'speck-boom,' and the 'zamia,' or sago palm, had been snapt like osier-twigs : and here and there, where the tough naked trunks of some large 'euphorbia' had withstood the first headlong shock of their onset, the creatures, as if in disdain, had torn them rooted from the soil, and left them withering, as trophies of their strength.

"Now, massa, take de olefant roer,"—said Gaspal, handing over to the young Drakenstein one of the portable, cannon-like guns, of twenty pounds weight, so called,—

"Me wish'ee de massa 'smaakly keeten,'

(good appetite) for de meat do run to be roasted ! Massa buy ‘ Dwyka-koe, speck-vet,’ —(female rhinoceros, fat as a pig) all for de one ittle ump o’ lead, and de lucky cock-de-eye !”

“ Cock the Duyvil !”—said friend Cootje, rather roughly,—“ Why the plague sit we to hear a fool prate like a ‘ slang-meester,’ (serpent charmer)—when we should be drawing the wind on the game ?—

“ Down to your duty, Gaspal !—out with your axe, man, and cut us a five-foot gape through the bush.”

“ Ah, de ‘ korte-pens ’ (empty paunch) do mak’ee de Massa berry cross ;”—said the Hottentot huntsman, with a most significant shrugging in of the stomach, but, at the same time, laying the blade of his pole-axe to the ground stems of the mimosas, with the dexterity of an old practitioner.

This was a task of some little labour, and, in the meantime, the other Hottentots,

with the assistance of a pan-flash of powder, had contrived to light some resinous sticks, which were to be carried as torches, for the purpose of firing the dry grass and under-wood, in case a beast at bay might render a retreat more desirable than easy.

These, and some other little 'notes of preparation,' such as an extra 'soopie' or so, (for *spirit* has ever been deemed the best ally of valour), were duly attended to, and, at last, the whole party deployed in single file through the breach just opened, into the Elephant track before alluded to. Here the first business was to examine the 'spoor,' or foot marks, left by the lordly animals in their passage, for the sake of ascertaining what time had elapsed since the spot was last honoured with their presence, and the consequent distance at which they might probably be found.

The result of this inquisition was anything but satisfactory; the Hottentots pro-

nounced the 'spoor' to be three days old, and their sagacity on such points is beyond question. Under these circumstances, Gaspal advised, that the forest should be skirted for a few miles further, but, as the horses wanted water, and the present track probably led to some place where it might be obtained, it was determined, for the present, at least, to pursue it.

In the absence of more stirring adventure, the hunters had time to note the scenery around them, and it was of such a character as could not be viewed with indifference. The small twinkling eyes of the Hottentots might even be remarked glancing right and left with tokens of admiration, as they led their horses through the splintered stumps, half-crushed bushes, and other impediments of the way; but to the Europeans, all was novel and enchanting.

The woody glens of Southern Africa are, indeed, characterized by a variety and luxu-

riance of beauty all their own!—The forest scenery of the temperate zones has a sombre majesty, a chilling solemnity in its deep shadowy arcades, pillared with towering trunks of mighty oaks, chestnuts, beech, or elm, and canopied with wide umbrageous branches, inter-arching in a thousand forms, which whispers of devotion,—and thus the Druids found a temple, without the toil of building. The solitary pine-forests of North America have no less a natural magic in their unbroken gloom, which may explain the fate-despising spirit, the heroic bearing of the stoical Indians, that tread the intricacies of their unmeasured depths, where Destiny seems enthroned with Eternity in silence!

Yes, there are pages in the Book of Nature, full of mysterious meaning,—but look around!

The path which the Elephants have trampled out here, winds down a precipitous ravine, partly lined by cavernous rocks of

decomposed granite, standing alone, or piled together in detached masses; and as the enormous beasts have thrown the impetus of weight and speed on this side or the other, the trailing creepers, torn from the time-stained surface of the stone, or the rifted trees and flattened herbage, are withering into blackness, as if some torrent from above had poured in a thundering cataract upon them.

Half-way below the axes glitter and flash at intervals, as two of the Hottentots are employed in partially clearing the encumbered track through which they would lead their horses, while the white smoke from the lighted wands, borne by a third, curls like a cloud of incense through the green branches. At a little distance behind stalks the muscular figure of young Drakenstein, with his heavy roer half presented, so that he could in a moment level it at any object of danger. His well-trained horse follows at his heels, with the docility of a

hound; while the strangers, still mounted, and with their fingers on their triggers, close the rear. The panting dogs, with hanging tongues, slavering jaws, and trailing tails, are prowling right and left, but on running to the extent of only a few yards, the poor beasts slink back again, as if conscious of some threatening but undefined danger.

For awhile, the hollow track dives into an ocean of green shade, under the umbrelated heads of some closely interwoven *Acacia* giraffes; and then anon, the leafy canopy changes to an open glade, and through the long flexile branches of the Eastern oak, in flickering disorder, the sunbeams flash their streams of golden light.

In the far distance, the varied foliage softly rising with the elevation of the ground, forms, as it trembles in a passing breeze, an amphitheatre of living waves.—There a dark and bronze-like green prevails, through which, at intervals emerging, the glittering plumage

of gorgeous birds gleams with a gem-like momentary radiance. And there the feathery crowns of *Zamia* palms, and the bright proteas, in varied tints, extend a gay expanse of vivid silky splendour.

The foreground is richer in its variety, and more picturesque from its distinctness. How beautiful those scarlet blossoms of the crassula, scattered among the mossy fissures of those dark and foraminous rocks, over which the glowing flowery branches of the chandelier aloe arch so proudly. And those decayed trunks of 'speck-boom,' embroidered with lichens, and half buried beneath luxuriant clusters of ivy-geraniums; while from a leafy blossomy screen of succulent plants the naked trunk of the tall 'umkoba,' or yellow-wood tree, so strangely flesh-like, in its red rind and purple veins,—starts abruptly forward, and rudely stretches its gaunt and arm-like branches into the shadowy load of sombre foliage that forms its head.

Around on every side where the oak, the sumach, the wild fig, or the palm-like euphorbia, afford sufficient hold, in broad festoons of living verdure, hang pendent trails of creepers; some jointed with cactus-like leaves studded with flowers; and others bare, brown, and shaggy, binding fantastically in cable coils upon the gnarled and mossy trunks, or intertwining above with green half-transparent far-shooting tendrils of recent growth into a net-work labyrinth.

The sultry noon comes on in stillness, and as the fragrance of the flowers, drawn out by the heat, rises, co-mingled with the damps of the lower dells, in a visible steam, so silently the footsteps of the hunters fall in the loose sand, that every rustle of the leaves is heard, if but a snake glide, startled to its hole,—or the slender ‘mais-hond’* spring through the tangled grass.

* Mais-hond (mouse-hound), a sort of weasel so called.

“ Hold back ! — That ‘ howl betokens harm ! ”

“ Yes, by Jove, the dog will bleed to death ! That hind leg’s broken, and the throat torn to the shoulder-bone ! ”

“ Stand back ! The Hottentots are cowering : ’tis no common beast !—Each look to his prime,—firm heart, and steady eye, the death-shot takes the skin.”

“ A panther !—Yes, by Jove, big as a tiger !—That spring has cleared the jungle ! Look ! he’s thrown himself betwixt the forked limbs of that old thunder-rifted oak, and, like a wild cat, lies on his side at bay !—Now ! ”—

“ No, Massa ! me say no fire Massa !—No, no, let de beast play de fisty-cuff’ee wid de dogg’ee.”

The voice of Gaspal sounded just in time for a reprieve, and three of the dogs ran gallantly in. The panther’s eyes glowed red with a fiery intensity, but still he remained

as motionless on his post of vantage as if an inanimate carcass.

The largest hound having warily measured his distance, now made a desperate snatch; but, with the dexterity of a juggler, the savage Pard struck him at once right and left with his armed paws, and the unfortunate lurcher fell, blinded, bleeding and howling to the earth. The second, cowed at the fate of his comrade, ran yelping off; but a fourth, coming to succour the third, both sprung forward open mouthed. As if amazed, the Panther half raised himself for the encounter, and when the dogs closed, first striking his claws with a sudden blow into the brain of the lowest, he caught the other in his jaws by the nape of the neck, and slung him over head, spinning through the air.

“ Now, by the Prince of the Duyvils, that dog-butcher would slaughter a pack !—

Stand back, Gaspal, I'll have a shot!—Back!—or look to yourself.”

The elephant ‘roer’ of Drakenstein was brought to a level, his finger on the trigger,—when, with the most provoking nonchalance, the wilful Gaspal perched himself on a fragment of rock immediately before the intended victim.

“No, not de Massa fire!—me teach’ee de beast von ittle trick’ee—de last he ebber vont to learn!”

As if awake to the hint, but with rather an equivocal expression of gratitude, the lips of the Panther retracted, until the glistening ivory of his fanged teeth was perfectly apparent:—his back too began to arch, as if he anticipated a leap, and his dilated tail grew restless as an angry serpent.

The Hottentot felt that time was precious, and whirling his glittering pole-axe round his head with a most intimidating flourish, he

brought it down with the rapidity of a thunder-clap, as he supposed, on the skull of his adversary!

“As he supposed!”—Gaspal had a keen eye, but the Panther had a quicker, and thus, by a change of attitude, the agile animal gave the descending axe free way to bury its fury in the harmless wood.

Disconcerted by this unexpected failure, Gaspal forgot himself so far, as to lean forward in attempting to withdraw his weapon. The Panther caught the momentary vantage, and striking a tremendous backward blow at the head of the unfortunate Hottentot, he tore off the better half of his left ear, and ripped up a considerable portion of his scalp.

Cootje bit his lip with rage, and fired! Men do nothing well in a passion, and an excellent charge was villanously wasted.

The Panther again crouched, as if preparing to bound on the wounded Hottentot, who, howling with pain, still staggered for-

ward—when the strange smile which has before been noted, played like a momentary gleam on the countenance of Laroon—his small rifle was brought as it were instinctively to his eye, and in an instant, shot through the brain, the Panther lay gasping on the sand.

“Father always on the right guess!”—Said the young Drakenstein, as gravely as the chancellor, but in a sort of involuntary soliloquy,—“Zounds, that salt-sea-shark will pick you out the Zee-koe’s eye in troubled water!—and little doubt of that.

“Ay, ay! get your knives to work, men,—that skin would make a saddle-cloth for a Prince,—throw it across the Captain’s spare horse to dry in the sun.

“Serves thee right, Gaspal, for spoiling my sport:—Come, man, get that bloody night-cap bound up easy, with a little gunpowder to keep all cool, and toddle on. Good luck or ill, they say, often bears twins on the same

chance, so look alive, we may have another startling rouse anon !”

With this encouraging caution, the hunters past forward much in the same order as before, save that Gaspal now rode a horse in the rear, and that three of their fiercest dogs were left “ hors de combat ” in the jungle.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Away, away, in the wilderness vast,
Where the white man's foot before never pass'd ;
Away, away, from the dwellings of men,
By the wild Deer's haunt, and the Buffalo's glen ;
By valleys remote, where the Oribi plays,
Where the Gnoo, the Gazelle, and the Giraffe graze ;
And the Gemsbok, and Eland unhunted recline,
By the skirts of gray forests o'ergrown with wild vine ;
And the Elephant browses at peace in his wood ;
And the River-horse gambols unscared in the flood ;
And the mighty Rhinoceros wallows at will
In the vley, where the Wild Ass is drinking his fill.”

PRINGLE.

WITHIN some three-quarters of a mile, the Elephant track emerged from the wood rather suddenly into a wide desolate hollow, choked up with rushes, tall cane-like reeds, and other aquatic plants.

Here then was the desired water to be sought,—but where?—grass, rushes, and reeds were all equally brown, dry, even as hay, and to the eye varying chiefly in the lighter or darker shades, into which a scorching sun had baked them.

Some remark of this nature was made, when one of the Hottentots gave a specimen of the singular faculty, which individuals of that race often possess, of discovering a distant fountain long before the parched lips of the traveller may hope to taste its cooling sweetness.

“Poola!—Poola!—(Water!—Water!)—Massa, me see de sun suck’ee up de breath of de vley (lake) Poola!—Poola!”

“Whew!—Whew!—Where’s the fun of this outcry? I never dipt a calabash the sooner for the best ‘kammer wyzer’ (water witch) of them all.”

“That may be true,” remarked Laroon, “but the mere fancy has a cooling influence,

as indeed, I have often felt my thirst assuaged even by the distant sound of falling waters.

“And on my life, there needs no magic in the matter:—look out beyond those gray and distant trees that stand alone, as if an island in the waste; is not a scarcely visible veil of thin white vapour rising over them like a pillar in the air?”

“There, now ’tis lost,—and now again it re-appears, precisely as the fitful breezes, however soft, break in upon it.”

“Mayhap the salt-sea spray has washed your eyes to the better polish, Sir; I see nothing yonder, more than some ‘karree-houts,’ (willow trees) and that there should be some water, too, is no great marvel!”

So saying, the young Drakenstein, boldly diverging from the track, began to lead the party through the tall over-topping reeds, directly towards the supposed spring. All here was so dry, that neither reptile nor lurking beast were to be dreaded; and as the

horses crashed down the straw-like barrier, the only sounds were the sharp rustle from the bursting stems, or the sudden whurr of the Loxia-orix or Granadier Bird, with its beautiful plumage of black and scarlet, as it rose affrighted from the curious nest of fine grass with tube-like entrance, which it so skillfully suspends between the reeds.

This dry morass was speedily past, but as the party approached the 'karree-houts', the prostrate herbage and innumerable tramlings sufficiently evinced, that the spot had been in no common request. And here the trees hung closely and darkly around a space of some few acres, which at certain seasons of the year formed a lagoon, but which, although green with aquatic plants, was now destitute of water.

Thus balked in the expectation of the moment, for it was evident that the only chance remaining, was to dig a well in the muddy soil, the thirsty hunters, with the

exception of Gaspal, exchanged silent looks of disappointment, in which the very horses might be observed to participate. As for Gaspal, poor fellow, his wound had hitherto kept him most discreetly quiet, as he journeyed on with his bandaged head drooping on his bosom. No sooner, however, had he reached the bank of the dried up Lagoon, than throwing his head back, and dilating to the utmost, the ample nostrils, which, with the yellow bridge of stretched-out skin above them, may be said to form in the Hottentot an apology for a nose, he drew in a snift as long and deep as that of a gormand at a city feast.

The next act was, to spur his jaded horse through the moist soil and lotus roots into the very centre of the Lagoon, when those that followed him saw, (or rather smelt) a sufficient cause for his avidity in the carcass of an immense Elephant, which having received a complement of balls that would have

sunk the launch of a seventy-four, had escaped to this lonely spot for water,—but in fact to die.

The legs of the mighty beast having at first been deeply and firmly planted in the mud, the body still remained erect, and the huge bones in some parts, exposed and bleached to a snowy whiteness, and in others, cloaked over with ragged patches of black and shrivelled hide, presented a spectacle hideous in the extreme! —That is, the object would have been revolting to any one, but an African hunter. As for Gaspal, the tusks were too great a prize for him to notice any thing beyond them, and, equally forgetful of his wound, in a burst of excitement, his axe was in a moment unslung to detach them from the skull. The exertion was beyond his strength, and Gaspal was ultimately indebted to the kindness of his companions, for a load of as fine ivory as ever swung at the saddle-bow of an Africander.

This spoliation of the dead having been effected, and the brackish water drained from a pit of some four feet deep, scooped out for the occasion, the party were about to depart, when the young Drakenstein, among the traces of the baboons, hyænas, antelopes, and buffaloes, with which the banks abounded, met at last with one which excited simultaneous shouts of delight from the Hottentots and himself.

This was the recent 'spoor' of the Dwyka, or Rhinoceros!—It seemed that the creature had but casually past, for only a single path remained; but in this, the three horse-hoof-like indentations of his massy feet were so deeply stamp'd into the soil, that no doubt could be entertained, but that he would prove no common specimen of that powerful and dangerous animal.

In this new cause of excitement, all feelings of fatigue were forgotten; the preparations for a hot pursuit were made with

the utmost celerity, and a council of war held on the moment, to deliberate as to the most probable means of rendering victory safe and easy.

Nothing inflates a man's vanity like asking his advice ! The matter in question, be it what it may, immediately sinks into insignificance under the important duty of giving SELF ! the most imposing attitude !—A dolt, whose intellect would not counterbalance a gnat, will keep the welfare of a kingdom on the poise, rather than grant his accordance to a simple truism, without, at least, a speech of most parliamentary dimensions ; and—

But Cootje had an invincible antipathy to all prosing, and, on the present occasion, spoilt some splendid displays of eloquence, by issuing the following orders of the day, —not, indeed to sound of trumpet, but with such significant and thundering cracks of his dreaded sambok, as plainly evinced to

the trembling Hottentots, that broken bones would be the cheapest fruit of disobedience.

“ Look that the dogs are dumb as fishes, while we fetch the wind on the beast!—Zounds, if you let them but wimper so loud as the squeak of a rat!”—(*Sambok en Forte.*)

“ Hold back !

“ Remember, not more than two shall fire on a burst. There’s no riddling the Dwyka through the hide, from tail to snout, like the sucking-calf of an Elephant. No, no, boys!—lay the lead in carefully;—hark’ee, at the eyes, under the shoulder-lift, at the jaw hinge, or at the flank:—I say carefully. Remember!”—(*Sambok en Alto.*)

“ Come, come, not so fast, another word yet!—If the ugly brute should run a muck at the horses,—hark’ee, ’twould be better by half to dig sulphur in the ‘Duyvil’s hottest mine, than shy off then!—No, ply him with ball like hail!—stick him in the flanks,—

singe his snout in a blaze of burning reeds,—throw the dogs before his eyes.

“Now, mind,—don’t spoil the tune for want of keeping time, or,”—(*Sambok en Altissimo.*)

These gentle preliminaries being arranged, the party again got in motion, and, as is usual on such occasions, in single file, the Hottentots by turns taking the lead on foot, not only for the sake of exactly following the track of the beast, but with the view of examining the ‘spoor’ from time to time, as to its freshness, so that sufficient time, in case of his immediate vicinity, might be given to guard against a surprise.

For a long way the track continued to traverse the lower bed of the hollows, now piercing through fields of dry reeds, which, in the proper season, form a chain of morasses, or threading the broken jungle that fringes the hanging woods above. The hunters were even becoming careless, from the dull un-

varying sameness of the pursuit, when, in passing a thicket, Laroon observed that the tender branches of a small euphorbia had been so recently cropt, that the corrosive, but, to the eye, milk-like juice of the tree was still trickling from its wounds.

“Zounds,” said Cootje, quietly, “the Dwyka is at hand.—Not a beast of the forest can stomach that poison, save himself.—Hist!”

The precaution was needless, for not a leaf stirred, and the humming of a bee was audible at twenty yards.

“Now,” said Cootje, in a low whisper, as the party passed on into a more open space, where, for the first time, a glimpse of the expected river might be discerned, through some scattered ‘uzer-houts’ (iron-wood trees), winding sluggishly, like a black serpent, along a rugged chasm, while a reedy swamp stretched out in front, and the jungle to the right, as the ground ascended, thickened into forest.

“ Yes, now’s the time to put the Dwyka on his mettle ;—the hill and trees will sicken him for speed ;—below, the river balks him, —and if he tries the swamp, we shall puzzle him worse than either.”

The justice of this opinion appeared to be generally admitted, and immediate arrangements were made to act upon it. One of the first of these was to send two Hot-tentots into the wood above, with the view of rousing the gentleman’s attention. Drakenstein and Vernon made slowly for the farther side of the swamp, while Laroon was left to hold the incensed animal in check, should he attempt to retreat by his former path into the jungle. In his present condition, little could be expected from Gas-pal, to whom was therefore assigned the more easy task of firing the reeds, if occasion demanded.

This distribution of force was very judiciously effected, but nothing appeared to fol-

low it. The intense green of the wood above drank in the sunbeams in undisturbed serenity as before; and except the low crooning of a wood-pigeon, or the remote chatter of a baboon, that seemed, as he mowed on a neighbouring tree, to mock their patience, the hunters found no token of life or motion.

This unsatisfactory stillness had continued for some ten minutes longer, when suddenly a small portion of the wood above became violently agitated:—the higher branches smote together, and some of the tallest trees bowed their leafy heads, as if the axe was at their roots. The commotion increased, —trees fell, and, with a harsh grunting snort, the ponderous beast burst through the crashing branches.

Not a shot had been fired, and the ‘Dwyka,’ making for the swamp, finished his gambol by rolling in the mud.

The creature was still splashing about most gloriously, when the Hottentots, fol-

lowing his track, issued from the wood. Hitherto they had acted with exemplary prudence, by doing nothing:—but now they marred all, by firing without any proper aim, or chance of success.

Astonished by the report, or rather pricked into attention by a trifling flesh-wound, the swarthy monster sprung to the land. For a few seconds he stood puzzled and irresolute, swinging his grotesque head from side to side, with a strange impatient motion. Whatever might have been the intention of this harlequinade, it was soon over, for, with a sudden lunge, the creature threw himself into extreme speed, and charged full in the direction of Laroon.

Long inured to emergencies of danger, the quick-eyed Creole foresaw the attack, and waited coolly for the proper moment to guard against it, by wheeling his horse behind a hummock of rock, most invitingly at hand. This moment had arrived,—the ‘Dwyka’

within some hundred paces, was rushing snorting forward amid a cloud of dust, when, had the manœuvre been effected, his skull must have been dashed against the projecting rock, for such was his speed, that halt or turn was equally impossible.

The moment had arrived,—but when Laroon attempted to give his horse the necessary impulse, he found the conscious animal shivering and motionless, paralysed by fear.

The time for thought was past:—with the icy chill of desperation at his heart, but still not disconcerted, Laroon cast his rifle on the adjacent rock, with convulsive energy withdrew his feet from the stirrups, pressed them on the shoulders of his steed, and vaulted in the same direction.

Scarcely was this desperate spring effected, when the ‘Dwyka’ came in contact with the horse, and crushing him against the rock, with the blow staved in his ribs, at the same moment as, by a jirk of his

head, he disembowelled him.—The Dwyka's horn hung rather in the chest of his victim; and in a second effort to withdraw it, the vicious beast fell on the mangled body.

Cootje said, afterwards, that at this juncture Laroon might with ease have dispatched the enemy, and that with even a single shot. Be that as it might, the 'Dwyka' soon arose, and shaking the clotted gore from his head, looked around, as if in search of a second conquest.

Gaspal, with Laroon's led horse, were at hand; but the 'Dwyka,' as if disdaining the slaughter of Hottentot or cattle, with a loud wild snort, galloped off in the direction of Cootje.

Now was the time for firing the reeds; and Gaspal managed the matter so adroitly, that as the 'Dwyka' floundered through the morass, the crackling fast-spreading flames gathered fiercely and terrifically around. Defended by his impenetrable hide, the ob-

durate beast, though bellowing with affright, still dashed impetuously forward, while ever and anon, his huge and dusky bulk, rising with sudden bounds from amid the burning reeds, as the black hull of a storm-tossed boat, staggers through the foam of broken waves, was seen by starts, environed with a flashing ocean of glowing fire, or disappearing in whelming eddies of whirling smoke.

On such occasions the damage is not so great as might be imagined; and when the retreating 'Dwyka' made the shore, he was in fact more dazzled by the glare, and intimidated by the crackling and smoke, than scorched by the flames. Upon the whole, however, his valour was on the wane, and, totally sick of the adventure, he very prudently prepared for flight, by rushing past Laroon, to retrace his former path through the hollows.

Among the jungles of this level, his tre-

mendous strength, as the hunters knew, would most avail him; and they accordingly made every possible exertion to impede his course.

Two of the re-mounted Hottentots put their horses on full speed, in a parallel direction, with the hope of over-reaching the beast; and Drakenstein, Vernon, and Gaspal followed, pêle-mêle, on the 'spoor.'

Hoarse shouts, and frequent shots, now rattling in the jungle or booming from the hollows, gave a wild animation to the scene. From time to time, too, a small cloud of white smoke, arising here and there above the distant foliage, gave notice that the expedient of firing the herbage was again had recourse to; but as the tumultuous rout passed off, and its discord, growing remote, died on the ear into a faint hoarse murmur, little idea could be formed as to the ultimate event of the chase.

But who, in so stirring a moment, could

reason so coolly? Absorbed in the headlong fury of pursuit, the hunters had passed Laroon unheeded; and no sooner were they gone, than obeying one of those impulses that were as the leading angels of his fate,—the latter mounted the spare horse before mentioned, and venturing on the wild track through which the ‘Dwyka’ had broken, sought, with an anxious look, the deepest shadows of the forest.

CHAPTER V.

“ But this denoted a foregone conclusion ? ” —

“ ’Tis a shrewd doubt, though it be but a dream.”

OTHELLO.

“ And the fleet-footed Ostrich over the waste
Speeds like a horseman who travels in haste ;
And the Vulture in circles wheels high over head,
Greedy to revel and gorge on the dead :
And the grisly Wolf, and the shrieking Jackal,
Howl for their prey at the evening fall ;
And the fiend-like laugh of Hyænas grim,
Fearfully startles the twilight dim.”

PRINGLE.

WHILE remaining as a guest in the house of Drakenstein, under the guise of amusement, but with the unremitting industry of a higher motive, Laroon had made himself acquainted

with the language of the natives, and with such particulars of their domestic manners and policy, as the family of his host could communicate.

Thus rich in a store of knowledge, which for practical purposes was of the first importance, and impressed with the idea that if the Mambookie, Amakossæ, Beetjuans, and the other independent tribes of Caffraria, could be brought to unite, their force, if added to either party of the settlers, whether Dutch or English, would have a prepondering influence, he had long entertained the ambitious hope of gaining an ascendancy among them, which might lead to that result. Not that Laroon, — a stranger, and therefore an object of suspicion, — was weak enough to imagine that he could gain his purpose by any immediate exertions of his own: such a folly was incompatible with a character so strangely mingling the most daring enthusiasm with the most calculating shrewdness of

worldly sagacity; and it was only by the agency of Makanna, that he had ever dreamt of success.

The Prophet Chieftain of the Amakossæ, even with the fullest allowance for the probable exaggerations of fear or interest, was evidently a person of no common order. The unearthly prodigies that were so fearfully whispered from man to man, among the Boors no less than his savage companions, might be as false as they were startling; but that Makanna, born of the common class, had obtained an authority in almost every horde superior to that hitherto held sacred to Chieftains of royal blood, was a fact, that implied, at least, that his mental capacities were of no ordinary grasp.

To obtain a favourable interview with this mysterious, and he doubted not, ambitious man, had been hitherto an object more desired than expected; and there were two circumstances, which, in different ways, had only

some forty hours before debarred Laroon from any immediate hope of the sort. The first of these, was the bitter antipathy borne by the elder Drakenstein towards Makanna, and the second, was the no less inconvenient clandestine intercourse which Cootje, as he was informed, had long carried on with the Chieftain, without his father's most distant suspicion.

Under these circumstances, accident he foresaw could only give him the free unshackled introduction which would suit his purpose. To traverse the wilderness, a stranger and alone, in quest of such a chance, was but the first step in this path of peril, and Laroon longed for the opportunity with all his native thirst of enterprise.

The sudden return of Cootje, and the hunting excursion of the morning, promised unexpected facilities, and Laroon prepared to profit by any adventure of the day, by securing an extra horse, and by taking such

additional baggage as circumstances might require. We have seen him obtaining instructions from Cootje, as to the track across the mountains, which led to the present home of Makanna; and the excitement of the 'Dwyka' chase gave the chance of slipping out of sight unperceived, while the freshness of the led horse, removed any danger of pursuit.

Thus secure in his retreat, Laroon, with the assistance of a compass, had cautiously and safely traversed such half-beaten tracks as the forest afforded, without diverging far from the course he wished to preserve. Still ascending the rugged track, after some three hours incessant battling with tangled roots and broken branches, delivered him at last from the leafy labyrinth, and brought him out on another such a mimosa dotted plain as the one which has been before described. Here, as the situation was more elevated and the earth more sterile, the grass was both

thinner and shorter, and a tolerable degree of speed might be maintained with little inconvenience to either man or horse.

By degrees, as the hanging woods that clothed the sides of the nearest mountains became distinct, the still rising foreground assumed a more picturesque and broken aspect.

For half a league or so, the surface of the earth, devoid of moisture, and scarcely covered with a thin substratum of soil, produced with difficulty a crop of lichens, and fatigued the eye with the dun mouse-like tint into which the unsparing sun had scorched them. Through this melancholy pall, at nearly regular distances to the parallel naked edges of the stratified rocks lying beneath, grinned out in long and bone-like ridges, while here and there, a serpent might be noticed basking in the sun, or shooting out his thin arrowy tongue after the minute black flies that swarmed around.

Presently, from the presence of superficial springs, or of a greater depth of soil, tokens of a more healthy vegetation began to appear. Patches of verdure, of a deep and velvet greenness, stretched boldly out, where the friendly shadow of an isolated rock gave them an occasional respite from the sun; groups of camel-thorn-trees were not wanting, and, more remote, a few stone-pines of noble growth stood detached, like solitary sentinels in the far distance.

As these indications became more frequent, the vegetation increased in variety and richness. The star-flower,* with its radiated corolla glowing with tints of white and gold, or mingled green and violet; or the gay blossoms of the amaryllis tribe, started up in beauty, beside the gray and lichened rocks.

The ethereal clearness of a bright and cloudless atmosphere now rendered the remote scenery strangely distinct, and the

* *Hypoxis stillata*.

elegant forms of a flock of many hundred antelopes were visible in the depths of a shadowy valley far beneath ; and farther still a haggard troop of ostriches appeared at full speed, as in alarm, with fanning wings, outstretched necks, and nimble feet, they sought some more wild and solitary covert.

It is in the total absence of every trace of human agency, that such scenes gain a spirit-hushing influence. Without a road, or show of distant shelter, or security of food, or of personal defence, the traveller feels himself as an unconnected atom in the stupendous theatre of Nature. The seasons in the august regularity of their periodical changes have left the impress of their presence on the vegetable world around :—Myriads of insect forms glittering in the sun-beams and humming in the shade are full of life, of love, of joy ;—their home was in the flowers crushed beneath his feet, and whose dying fragrance seems to breathe a reproof on his intrusion.

The fowls of Heaven flit by him, with a power, a buoyancy of form and spirit, which seems to mock the impotency of his condition. The mild-eyed antelopes fly from his presence, as if they recognised an evil influence in the air his breath hath tainted, and the ravening beasts of the forest cross his path with indifference, as if conscious that the shades of night will render him their prey without a struggle.

In such a moment, the paltry impositions of artificial society,—the gewgaw external distinctions of cast;—the formalities of power!—your maces!—your powdered wigs!—and edgeless swords of state! seem less substantial than the unsure remembrance of an idiot's dream:—By Jove! a single draught of cool spring water, fresh and sparkling, were worth them all!

The nearest way to the fane of Wisdom is through the porch of melancholy thoughts. When the heart thus begins to vibrate to

the mystic harmonies of Nature, it is not long before the spirit imbibes a portion of the sublimity that floats around it:—like the fabled Antæus, it finds support in the moment of despair, and the embracing destiny that would crush it to the earth, only yields it to a mother, whose fostering arms redouble all its powers.

When the death-like silence of the Desert is most oppressive;—when the heart, remembering its weakness, grows chill with the sound of its own beatings; then is it that the soul learns to triumph in its strength; and, relieved from the frivolous anxieties of ordinary life, concentrates all its faculties. In the near contemplation, danger loses the vague and shadowy character, that gave it half its horror; and in the absence of human support, we lean with child-like trustfulness on that Protecting Arm that guides the planet in its orbit.

Something of all this passed in the bosom

of Laroon;—the day was past its prime, and the untracked wilderness lay wide in silent desolation all around. In accordance to the usage of the country, he halted for awhile, and ungirthing his horse, suffered the animal to relax its over-strung sinews, by rolling on the turf; then, seated on a stone, the wanderer, placing his sketch-book and compass on his knee, contrasted carefully the hasty map of the morning, with the bearings of the mountain crags in the distance, and formed his resolutions for the future.

A light meal of figs, and small cakes of millet, with a scanty draught of water, from the only skin the baggage contained, now followed; the latter, having the addition of a dash of brandy:—and fare of the same sort, with the omission of the last, was given in a more liberal allowance to the horse. This refreshment concluded, Laroon recommenced his solitary march, with a resolution that would have done honour to the most adven-

turous Africaner in the colony, but with the promise of greater difficulties at hand, as the mountain passes were soon to be encountered.

The surface of the country now assumed a far more rugged and forbidding aspect, and as the lower ridges of the rocky hills were approached, it required a constant vigilance to avoid being entangled among the thorny jungles which encumbered every turn and hollow in their vicinity.

Still progressing, at each step the scenery frowned with a more stern and desolate air of grandeur. Abrupt cliffs of stratified rock, undermined and broken, bulged out above in enormous wall-like masses; ancient forest trees, still in luxuriant vegetation, filled the gloomy 'kloofs' beneath, and far beyond, the snow-clad pinnacles of the Zuurchberge and Stormberge mountains gleamed brightly on the clear blue concave.

The crag called the 'Giraff's Head' was

now at hand, and the pass, or mountain gorge, which was the most critical portion of the journey, lay, as Laroon remembered, to the north of this remarkable eminence.

The defile opened with a chasm some thousand feet in depth, from which every breath of wind was excluded, by lofty screens of parched and sterile rock, and into which the sun directly glowed in full effulgence. A tortuous gully, scooped out by wintry torrents, formed the only track, and this, precipitous and broken, seemed to debar an entrance. At first, from space to space, the jaded horse floundered through drifts of sand, gathered deeply in the hollows, and then with pain stretched his weary limbs over rude slabs of rock, piled like gigantic steps, worn to a glassy smoothness by the long laving of the wintry waters, and here and there the soil having been washed from beneath, they lay in hollow jeopardy, poised

with a sort of balance, that rendered it still more perilous to tread them.

For more than half an hour, both man and beast had continued, by mutual exertions of most enduring patience, to surmount these obstacles, until at length, when half way up, a broad and moss-grown rocky shelf gave space and opportunity for rest.

Here for a while, the mere cessation from toil was a positive luxury, but this feeling of exhilaration was too soon succeeded, by the startling and annoying consciousness, that the poor panting horse, on whose sides the foam and sweat still hung, and who was strangely unwilling to remove, was fast sinking under the enervating influence of the intolerable heat.

Every effort to arouse him, whether of kindness or severity, was equally in vain; and worn out with abortive attempts, and almost hopeless, Laroon looked around to see

if materials for a fire could be collected, if indeed he should be compelled to pass the night in so exposed a situation. A few hasty glances were sufficient to answer this question in the negative. Among the rifted sun-lit precipices a few stunted proteas, and geraniums, now withered into blackness, by the parching glare of the season, hung here and there, at inaccessible heights; and down below, the yawning gulf beyond, that through the fiery atmosphere seemed to flutter like the unreal image of a dream, forbade any thought of retreat.

With the savage energy of despair, Laroon, now grasping the bridle, prepared to goad the horse to an extremity, when he observed that, as the worn out creature, from wilfulness or weariness, was backing towards the precipice, the coming moment might be fatal to them both.

At this awful juncture a shrill unearthly scream re-echoed from the rocks—a shadow

passed—the affrighted horse sprung wildly forward, and when Laroon had time to turn, he saw the proud black eagle of the Cape on outstretched pinions swooping down the chasm, as if the master demon of the dell.

Once more in motion, stretching, panting, and staggering, the horse continued to climb from ridge to ridge. At each extremity the assistance of a leading hand, without regard to personal risk, was skilfully afforded, but anxiety for the result became more and more painful, as at every fresh impediment increasing fatigue rendered the efforts of the animal more feeble, and the enterprise more desperate. The sultry glow too of a meridian sun reflected on all sides from the naked rocks, in suffocating stillness, grew more and more oppressive; and the harassing smoothness of the track, more perfect with its steepness.

How many substantial triumphs that Prudence doubted, have Time and Patience won!

—and it was not the least, when, emerging from this dangerous ravine, Laroon found himself on the verge of a considerable extent of table-land. To the west, this plain was shaded with a range of mountains, craggy, stern, and desolate, while northward, it declined into a rich diversity of hill and dale, dusky with woods, and not unfrequently streaked with the silvery sheen of distant rivers.

This was the promised land of his hopes, and if all went well, a single day would, perhaps, bring him into the presence of him, whose influence might realize the wildest dreams of his ambition, and in whose mystic character, his curiosity and love of enterprize might be fully gratified, but yet Laroon felt sick at heart and utterly dissatisfied.

Was it that unaccountable foreboding, fore-consciousness of evil, that most men at some period of their lives have known, but will not acknowledge, that with incoherent

doubts, and icy chills, fretted his drooping faculties:—or that exhausted nature gave place to melancholy thoughts;—were it this, or that, or both, the wretched have no hope, nor had Laroon.

As if for the first time become the unresisting victim of a strange fatuity; he felt ‘self-banished’ from the gentle being whose love to him was life!—and that even at the moment, when something seemed to whisper to his heart, that she might need his best protection.

And what too, was the meed for which he had made himself an exile from her side? To let loose those floods of lawless desolation, which might indeed undermine the present foundations of power in the Colony,—but was he certain, that the void would be supplied by better materials?—As a French subject, (of that day, and may the feeling never return) he might rejoice in wresting so rich a prize from the foreign empire of England,—but

would the possession, if secured, be sufficiently lasting to repay the trouble of the seizure?

And more than all, what had the sophistry of 'national animosities' which with all their wickedness, are but the lures of rival politicians, to do with the 'free-born children of Nature,' he was about to visit, that they should become as a weapon in the hand of either party?—And let either side prove victor, would not the heartless selfishness of European usurpation, indifferently as friend or foe, its purpose once accomplished, drive back the tawny children of the forest beyond the verge of social improvement, or any reciprocal advantage, for all the suffering they might endure.

If, too, the storm of war was once abroad, what security was there, that, the spot in which he might venture to lodge the floweret of his heart, would escape the visitation of its thunderbolts?

Thus, with mind infirm of purpose, and heart desponding with love and anxiety, did the once gay undaunted Laroon pursue, in sullen indifference, his solitary way. As if participating in the clouded feelings of his master, the wearied horse, too, now hung heavily on the rein, laying his ears back with a shrewd significance of dissatisfaction, lifting each hoof as if it bore a hundred weight, and dropping it so demurely, that even the slow tortoises ventured to cross the path before him.

At last, as the shadows lengthened, the heat subsided with declining day; and the vapours, condensing gradually, as evening advanced, began to fill the distant west with groups of painted clouds.

The snowy mountain peaks grew rosy with a kindred flush,—a soft aerial veil of purple-tinted haze stole far and wide over the woody ‘kloofs;’ while, recovering from

their noon-tide lassitude, the fierce inhabitants of the jungle began to prowl for prey.

Discordant cries, remote, but still distinct, and growing louder as the gloaming thickened, rang, at intervals, fearfully on the ear;—myriads of humming insects filled the scattered herbage with a drowsy charm, and the rich jasmine-like fragrance of the ‘avond-bloem,’* came in luscious breathings from the more deep and shadowy glens.

As Laroon well knew, the transition from day to night, in this climate, is too hasty to be trifled with, and he, accordingly, prepared to meet the coming darkness with all due precaution.

At a spot where, in front, the naked surface of a hummock of rock offered a wall-like shelter, while to the left, a group of African oaks, unincumbered by jungle,

* Evening Flower.

presented a supply of fuel without the danger of an ambush ; having first relieved the horse from his travelling gear, and teddered him out, Laroon made a more substantial meal than at the mid-day halt. The next task was to flash a little powder in a wisp of dry grass, and then the grand foundation was laid, for the prime safeguard and comfort of a travelling Africander.

An ample supply of dry and decayed fragments were easily broken from the trailing branches of the ever-green oaks, and, in a short time, the smoke of a handsome fire was curling around the rock in a thousand fantastic forms. The necessary exertion, the cheerful flashing firelight, the fragrance of the balmy air, and mild effulgence of the stars, insensibly induced a more tranquil state of mind ; and when, at last, as, pillowed with his saddle, wrapt with an ample caross, and, more than all, with his feet just at a comfortable distance from the glowing embers,

Laroon disposed himself for sleep; the only real subject of annoyance was the faint but repeated howling from the forest.

On such occasions, the fire is ever deemed an effective protection; and even if it were not so, Laroon had no other:—nature was exhausted, and he fell asleep.

There have ever been a set of second-rate opinions, on subjects absolutely inconclusive, which every man of *sense* is, nevertheless, expected most resolutely to maintain. By the mere mention of some half dozen of these baseless, dogmatical assumptions, political, theological, philosophical, and moral, it is more than probable that the solemn wiseacres of our social circle might be most egregiously scandalized. With due decorum and forbearance, we will, therefore, only venture modestly to hint, that the opinions, ancient and modern, on the subject of dreams, are totally at variance.

Your sages of the olden time, whether

sacred or profane, judging on those facts now adroitly termed “ remarkable coincidents,” concluded that, sometimes, the controlling Ruler of the Universe, through the medium of dreams, gave mental impulses to the weak but responsible agents of His power. With no better intelligence to guide them, and precisely on the same grounds, except, indeed, that the number of such corroborating facts (i. e. coincidents) have been ever since accumulating, your ‘ *sensible man* ’ of the present day thinks the matter beneath his notice ; and, if mooted, by an emphatical “ fudge ! ” leaves you under the ban of “ imbecility,” if you confess it worth a doubt.

Now, gentle and most indulgent Reader, thou needest not to be reminded, that Miss Falkland, at this period of our history, was, from the politic plottings of the two Drakensteins, herself exposed to the dangers of a sojourn in the wilderness ; and, if the following dream was nothing more than a ‘ re-

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markable coincident, it led, at least, to a result sufficiently substantial.

Some three hours of a sleep more profound than ordinary, had past into those uneasy tossings, which betoken that the sentinels of the soul are challenged by some unwonted exigence, when, after a vague succession of indistinct terrific incidents, the imagination of Laroon placed him again on board the Ganges.

Strangely conscious, not only that he was deposed from the command, but that, by some incomprehensible influence, he was crushed into a coffin-like cell, closed by the panel of an ancient portrait, and seeing, as through its varnished eyes, while forcibly pent up in suffocating endurance, on one side of the state-room, which had, indeed, as he then remembered, just such a picture. The furniture and fittings were all, too, as they had been; but to Laroon, who, in reality, had never

noted them, they now appeared circumstantially perfect, in each minute detail. The cabin windows were open, but, instead of the fresh air and heaving ocean, there frowned beyond them, through the thick shadows of the night, the gloomy borders of a dry and sapless forest.

With wild incongruous change, the sleeping couch of her he loved, of Bertha, was now before him, all over canopied with those unwholesome, dead, and mildewed branches: and she herself, in all the sweet decorum of pillowed maidenhood, lay steeped in tranquil slumber; at each alternate breath, a murmur, as of far distant music, stole around, and sometimes, too, as if a happy vision intervened, the ripe moist coral of her lips grew arched, as saints may smile when sinners are forgiven.

A dimness gathered; and then arose a form, as that of one who had been buried,

and was not now alive, and yet was moved as with a living spirit, that could for evil animate its cold revolting limbs.

With vampire greediness the figure staggered (for still the rigidity of death remained) on towards that lonely unprotected couch of sweet unconscious innocence:— Then came upon the sleeping youth the struggle of an agony:—The accursed blood-sucking livid lip pressed ardently the blue veined temple of the slumbering maid, then murmuring in her sleep, and monster-like, the shrunk and glassy eyes, with strange intelligence, gloating and fierce, gleamed on the bleeding victim.

More fell than in the life, and paler far, yet still it was the face of him, the vile, deformed, malicious mariner, Laroon before had known his enemy.

The agonizing struggle to tear the demon from his prey returned, but powerless was

every limb, his brain throbbed wildly, and his very sight grew faint with impotent rage:—And then again, the hideous, animated corpse, seemed with its clammy icy hands to draw aside the maiden's long depending tresses, that veiled her beauties even from the night, and pressed impatiently the gently swelling breast they shaded.

Laroon convulsively awoke! and while still shuddering, felt with surprise, some cold and moving substance meeting his touch!

Fully aroused, the sense of present danger restrung his nerves, and then he found that the poor sagacious horse had pressed his chill nostrils on his master's cheek to gain attention, while low, deep, hungry howls of ravening beasts, seemed as if they filled the lonely waste around.

The fire was almost out, and the Hyænas, as yet remote, watched jealously the sinking of its dying sparks. A sullen growl, and

then a prolonged and broken snarl, shrill as the smothered laughter of a maniac, rose nearer, and nearer still! the horse began to plunge and rear tremendously, dashing his heels into the air, as if the ravening teeth were even upon his haunches.

Perchance another moment had been fatal, to one, or both, when Laroon adroitly cast a handful of loose gunpowder on the smouldering ashes. In sudden shower from amid the flashing flame and towering smoke, a deluge of sparks rose with a burst, and drifting off, expired slowly in the wind; and for the time at least, the expedient had succeeded, as a loud rush, and general yell of alarm told, that the hungry troop were receding to a more respectful distance.

Without a moment's delay, Laroon busied himself in replenishing the fire with such fragments of half-burnt wood as lay scattered around. If these should prove sufficient, the

future safety of the night would be secured! —but if not—there were hollow booming noises echoing from the waste, which betokened the presence of an enemy, far more to be dreaded than the cruel but cowardly Hyæna.

CHAPTER VI.

“ The warlike Kossa still doth hold
The fields his Fathers gained of old ;
With club and spear in jocund ranks,
Still hunts the Elk* by Chumi’s banks.
By Keisi’s meads his herds are lowing,
On Debe’s slopes his gardens glowing ;
Where laughing maids at sunset roam
To bring the juicy melons home.”

PRINGLE.

“ Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell.
But hush ! hark, a deep sound strikes like a rising knell.”

BYRON.

THE “ Umzi,” or native village, which Laroona was desirous of visiting, and that we have left him with so poor a chance of reaching,

* The Antelope Oreas is so called by the Africanders, it is as large as an ox.

had been hastily formed near the battle-field on the fertile banks of the Denbe. There the people of S'Lhambi had assembled, soon after the warriors of that Chieftain, and of his son Dushani, in league with Hinza and Makanna, had defeated the followers of the young King Gaika, who, as the ally and protege of the English, was become an object of suspicion to the more free and patriotic hordes.

The battle which led to this victory, had been fought on the hilly ground which borders the Buffalo River; and if Makanna, on whom the command principally devolved, had prophesied truly in foretelling the unexpected conquest that followed,—it must be allowed, that in the management of the attack, he had certainly taken the best means for the fulfilment of his own prediction.

With a weary policy, well worthy of his name, his first care had been to allure the far more numerous army of Gaika into

a district from which the game had been previously driven, and having thus entrapped the enemy, he managed to keep them stationary, and at bay for two days.

During this period they were without food, and harassed out by reiterated alarms; and when at last the Prophet Chieftain condescended to order an attack in good earnest, it was attended with a device, which rendered the acknowledged valour of his opponents of little value.

For some time previously Makanna, foreseeing the struggle about to ensue with the false-hearted ally of the 'Macooas' (white men), had trained a select number of his followers to the use of fire-arms, and having also obtained the co-operation of a band of mounted marauding outlaws, — Hottentot, Dutch, and Malay,—whom he had for some time countenanced, the whole were now placed in ambush as a reserve. Unconscious of this circumstance, and confident in

the overwhelming superiority of their numbers, the warriors of Gaika no sooner saw their enemy fairly in the field, than with thundering yells of anticipated triumph, they rushed to the encounter.

The event seemed to flatter their vanity, and the van-guard, led by Dushani, giving way in affected disorder, the men of Gaika charged *pêle-mêle*, and then unexpectedly found themselves in flank and rear, all at once, exposed to a murderous cross-fire from the bushy covert.

The rout that followed was as general as it was sudden; and thus defeated in the moment of fancied victory, hundreds were slaughtered in a stupor of surprise; and of those who attempted to escape, at least a third were regularly hunted down like wild beasts in the jungle, and others, when at full speed on the hills, picked off as a jest by Makanna's musketeers.

Intoxicated with a victory so unexpected,

and yet so easily won, and unrestrained by discipline, the combined forces of the patriot Chief dispersed at once, on the field that had witnessed their triumph. Some sought their distant homes, to receive the reward of their prowess in the admiration of their kindred: but, stimulated by the hope of plunder, the greater number, in two separate parties, the main being led by one of their favourite chieftains, S'Lhambi, hurried forward to make a marauding inroad on the colony.

This wanton and weak aggression, after a few burnings and massacres, was speedily repelled; and indeed the Reader has already learnt the result from the report of Cootje, who, it will be remembered, told his father, that—"the Kaffre king, S'Lhambi, with a swarm of naked Amakossæ, was flying for life, before the English red-coats."

This indiscreet and unfortunate enterprise was, from the first, discountenanced by Ma-

kanna, whose influence over his more immediate partizans was zealously exerted to keep them as yet in a state of perfect neutrality with their European neighbours; and among the more intimate friends who followed his advice on this occasion was the gallant son of S'Lhambi, the young Dushani, whose feigned retreat had been so adroitly managed.

This young warrior, although so much exposed, had escaped the casualties of the fight; but the excessive exertions of that tumultuous day, after a short interval, had been followed by a fever of alarming character.

In the absence of his father and other relatives, the immediate care of the invalid, by the established usage of Amakossena, fell entirely into the hands of one of those privileged crones, an 'amakenkazi,' or sorceress, of whom a sample is to be found in every 'umzi' of Southern Africa, and who, by the

assumption of magical power, frequently gain a dangerous influence over the more frank and simple-hearted natives.

The individual on whom the care of the young warrior in this instance devolved, had not taken up her diabolical trade without the talent to give it the show of extraordinary seeming, a cunning to devise, and a relentless heart to execute the sternest behest of the Fiend she affected to control. Untouched by the superstitious dread which thrilled the hearts of others when in the presence of Makanna, and prompted no less by malignancy of mind, than by a natural jealousy of the supernatural endowments he affected, this dangerous woman had long waited for some chance to undermine his reputation, and, if possible, to ensnare his life.

In the unexpected sickness of Dushani, during the absence of his father, and still more in the friendship which would naturally allure Makanna into some responsible

interference with the invalid, she foresaw a train of circumstances, big with the mischief her evil heart desired.

For awhile the beldam attended the youthful sufferer with all a parent's quiet assiduity. Day after day, and night by night, while yet the fevered boiling blood was maddening in his veins, with patience unsubdued, and strength steeled by a will so obdurate that age could not impair it, she had kept a constant vigil by his couch. Nor was there wanting skill to choose of herbs and fruits, such as might minister refreshment, and well allay the fire that scorched within. Her watch was blessed,—and then each coming hour evinced some token of reviving health; but, strange to say, it seemed that she, to whom the sufferer owed so much, now pined herself, and drooped as if she sorrowed at the salutary change her nurture had effected; and sometimes too, she had been seen to gaze upon Dushani, when

buried in a deep and wholesome sleep, with look so wilful, and haggard in its wildness, that it seemed as if the very glance might blast with palsy where it fell.

The young Dushani was much beloved among the warriors of the horde, and all were loud in praising the skill it seemed had saved him from the grave; nor were Makanna's thanks the faintest, or his gifts the least.

Although the fever was subdued, there lingered still a weakness, and one day, with well-feigned deference, the beldam wistfully inquired of Makanna, if his superior skill could not prescribe some simple that might enrich the patient's thin and watery blood. Quite unsuspecting of any hidden purpose, and anxious only for the friend he loved, the Chieftain pressed the strawberry-flavoured juice of some wild cactus-figs into a jar of 'amaaz,' or thickened milk, and bade her

keep it for Dushani: the arch dissembler bowed her head in smiling gratitude, and those who saw the gift, said "the charmed milk" would work a speedy cure; and so it had, (for the cooling simple deserved all praise, except of magic, but that the crone's infernal art soon changed it to a poison.

The dose she ventured on at first was cautiously small; but a few drops of "the death water"* added to the milk—no more! that dose, however, was easily augmented, and, with a little use, the flavour to the patient seemed unchanged.

The "Amakenkazi" wanted now a witness who might stand, unconscious of her fatal deceit, and watch the influence of the medicated milk on the confiding victim, whom her fell purpose had thus fore-doomed to die by inches, of the fancied spell. Re-

* A poison, made by steeping a plant of the solanum class in water.

lardless as cunning, she fixed upon a young and blooming girl, who long had loved Dushani, and whom as yet, with equal cruelty, she had constrained to keep aloof. The maiden came, blushing with smiles of grateful joy; and, as she ministered with tenderness untired, from her dear hands, the unsuspecting youth, from hour to hour, drank greedily—the poison!—Nay, rather say, the renovating draught, prepared by Friendship, given by Love.

Hour by hour, sure as the sand sinks in the inverted glass, but all insensibly, as fading flowers bend their drooping heads without apparent motion,—even so, Dushani's pulse grew fainter! Gazing on her he loved in one long ecstasy, the youth knew nothing of the change, until at last his eyes becoming strangely dim, he felt a sudden doubt shoot through his bosom with an icy chill; his voice too altered; and she, his loved one too, even then, but all too late, as if awaking

with a new and fearful consciousness, cried out for help! and fainted!

There is a sound of shrill wild laughter in the hut; and hark! without,—music, dancing, and pealing shouts, as of a multitude when gathering crowds are full of joy.

The “umzi” is all alive with merry faces, and, as the last beams of the setting sun fall flickering through the flexile branches of overhanging trees, in broad disordered patches of amber-tinted light, swift glancing groups of painted Amakossæ, all gay with waving plumes, and hurrying to and fro, now glisten in the sunny gleam, and now dive from the eye, lost in the shadowy recesses of green-leaved arbours.

All to one spot are gathering to celebrate a festival, and, even now, the war-dance is commenced; from time to time, the hollow booming of the “tree-drum,”* deep as the

* “Tree-drum,” a huge instrument made by stretching a raw hide over the section of a hollow tree.

rumble of the thunder-cloud, re-echoes up the glade ; while the bright " kirri,"† rattling as they close, fill up the intervals. Some fresh excitement now calls the pleasure-seeking crowd away. The hunters are returning ; by the river side two snow-white bullocks slowly win their way, loaded with various game, Jerboas, Gennet - Cats, the honey-pilfering Rattle, with its brindled skin, and that fair stately Antelope, the " Kooda," with spiral horns and richly flavoured haunches.

Those are bright hearty greetings from children, wives, and sisters, for they, the way-worn hunting troop, have been long absent. See, already the laughing girls, their bright swift glancing eyes darting delicious mischief, are decked with Ostrich-plumes, that formed a portion of the spoil ; the younger boys are whooping wildly in a

† " Kirri," a short battle-axe resembling the Indian tomahawk.

mimic chase ; and, even now, the new-made crackling fires begin to smoke.

“ O yes, indeed the venison feast will be to-night :—the people doubted when Makanna fixed the time,—but he can read the stars, and knew full well the hunters would return.”

“ Ay, as we live,—and that to the hour,”—replied the aged Amakossæ, to whom the previous remark was made.

“ Yes, to the hour !—The filmy vapours drifting from the woods are messengers to him ;—and for his ear, the faintest moanings of the wind have secret meanings.

“ But I can tell of something better than the feast :—this morning Makanna gave to the young Dushani a life-reviving charm !—and we may well expect no less than that to-night, when the proud warriors count the trophy-scars that grace their thighs, one for each foeman slain, as is our custom, Dushani will be there, and show the most.”

“And she, his lovely long-betrothed bride, that, fading as a thirsting flower, has pined for his recovery, how will she then rejoice.”

“Right, we have all good cause for comfort, thanks to the great Makanna!—But see, the dance is done, and, by the hushing of the crowd, he comes.”

“Yes, those are the children, orphans of the war, that owe to him a father’s care. The little urchins, every night when first he leaves his solitary grove, some with blooming branches, and some with torches, thus marshal in the path of their protector.”

A simultaneous movement of the people evinced that the old man was correct in his conjecture, and, opening suddenly from right to left, they prepared to form a circle of audience. In this open space, a group of ‘Amapakati’ (great men,) still remained, and from the silence which prevailed, it seemed that some event of interest, or solemn rite was about to ensue.

Having dismissed the children with smiles, and many a fond caress, the Prophet Chieftain of the Amakossæ now advanced.

A step of bold elastic grace, and eye of eagle keenness, accorded well with the reputation of Makanna as a warrior, but the benevolent expanded forehead, and the open dignified expression of his countenance, were totally opposed to the murky abstraction, or malicious cunning, either of the self-deluded enthusiast, or of the designing practitioner, on the superstitious follies of the crowd.

Neither was the stature of the Chieftain what vulgar prejudice ascribes to men of heroic daring :—Yet withal, there was a compact solidity in the well knit joints, and a muscular beauty in the free outline of the graceful limbs, which betokened physical powers of no ordinary kind.

Though in itself of little moment, perhaps one of the most striking circumstances in the appearance of Makanna was, that his skin

had not been rubbed over with the deep-red pigment, so universally employed in that way by the Amakossæ, but instead of it, the more scarce and costly 'sibilo,' or shining ore of manganese, generally used by that people to give a silvery gloss to their hair, was adopted by the Chieftain as a general cosmetic, and the metallic splendour which, at every changing light, it gave to the natural deep-brown lustre of his clear complexion, was in the highest degree picturesque and pleasing.

In other matters of costume, Makanna assumed little more than was common to other Amakossæ of rank; the 'unebe,' or short mantle of Antelope hide, ornamented with two central rows of highly polished steel studs, and bordered with a fringe formed with strips of the richly spotted fur of the Ounce, hung gracefully at the left shoulder from a neck-chain of broad links, so as in part to cross the thighs, one corner

being twisted in the kilt-like belt encircling the loins, which was itself entirely covered with small oval plates of copper. The arms and limbs were naked, save that the feet were defended with sandals, the straps of which were handsomely bound over the ankles, and that seven armlet-rings, or bangles of the finest ivory, were worn above the elbow of the left arm, and a broad strap-like collar armed by a double row of the large fanged teeth of the Lion, with their points sticking out on the right.

Uncovered, as is indeed the common practice of the Amakossæ, except on particular occasions, and all unarmed, but still fiercely majestic in the untamed energy of savage life, Makanna paused, and beckoned to the awaiting warriors, as one to whom command is as a native impulse, rather than the result of circumstance.

The conference had been long continued, and still as yet, the people preserved their

distant ranks, although impatient for the promised feast, when from Dushani's hut, burst suddenly the dread 'ullalula' or howl of death!—Through all the Umzi, as with contagious speed, the fearful cry resounded; and then forgetting each domestic tie, nay, though it were to snatch the nestling infant from her breast, each woman rushed wildly forth, and to the night air echoed back the shrill distracting signal.

The warriors hastened to the spot, and all eagerly followed save Makanna, who with mingled feelings of suspicion and surprise, awaited calmly for the sequel: this suspense was however soon removed by the return of a party, bearing the apparently lifeless body of Dushani.

With faltering steps, and head depending as in a stupor of despair, came closely after the gentle girl that loved him. The thronging crowd stood hushed in breathless expectation, when suddenly arousing as from a trance,

the maiden snatched away the unconscious hand of her lover, then held by Makanna, and with a supernatural vehemence, cried out aloud,

“ Vengeance !—Men of Ammakossena, give me revenge !—Let not the murderer mock the slain before the blood has time to settle in his veins !—Revenge !—Yea, vengeance for Dushani !”

Thus exclaiming, her beautiful bosom bared in desperation, and her naked arms thrown wildly in the air, with frantic haste, the maiden darted from group to group, uttering by starts her fearful adjuration,—until at last exhausted, and falling in the dust, a swoon relieved her with forgetfulness.

Too much distressed with the dangerous state of Dushani to mark these incoherent ravings, Makanna attempted in every way to recover the fleeting senses of his friend, and in some degree succeeded ; while a large portion of the crowd were, in the mean time,

engaged in an occupation, which they considered of at least equal importance.

At the moment, when Dushani was removed from his couch of panther skins, the fiendish nurse, with all the ceremonial of her vocation, pronounced him the victim of some malignant sorcerer, who, in a single day, had defeated all her past exertions, and completely counteracted the more benignant power she served. As this subtle representation was in perfect accordance with the established superstitions of the Amakossæ, its truth was unquestioned, and the fact greedily admitted. The next step, as the artful crone well knew, would be for the people to call upon her under pain of death, to point out the magician, from whose diabolical art she had suffered defeat. The expected demand was made, and with an hypocritical show of lamentation, as if at the moment foreseeing some strange dilemma, the Enchantress prepared to fulfil the preliminary rites.

For this purpose, the accuser must at first be enveloped in total darkness, from which situation, after the supposed celebration of incantations too mysterious for the popular gaze, she issues either in a paroxysm of delirious excitement, and armed with an 'umkoneto,' (javelin) to strike the victim of her suspicion; or, with the moody wailings of a maniac, she throws "the magic ashes," as a badge of accusing infamy, upon the guilty party, whom the warriors, under the authority of ancient usage, and constrained by the most horrible maledictions, must then immediately dispatch.

On such occasions, it is generally so managed by the 'amakenkazi,' that some previous cause for popular odium against the unfortunate wretch fixed upon, gives an indirect sanction to the enormities of a cruel superstition; or, as it sometimes happens, the question of guilt may be successfully retorted on the accuser, who, if the people

pronounce her an impostor, is herself cruelly destroyed.

The probability of such a sequel might perhaps explain the great delay which occurred on the present occasion. Repeatedly had the awaiting warriors struck on the door of the darkened 'inhlu' (hut) with their 'umkonetos,' in token of impatience, before the crone appeared, and then she seemed as shrunk, as changed, as much enfeebled, as if she had endured the wearing sorrows of forty years since last they saw her. The crowd stood hushed around in silent awe, while, as if her outward faculties were still benumbed, and her soul torn with heartfelt, fierce, consuming struggles, the Enchantress lingered on the threshold; and then, at last, staggering off, she left it with smothered groans, that told of pangs too deep for utterance.

Clothed merely (as is the practice on such occasions) about the waist, and having

the limbs and eyelids on either side grotesquely marked with opposite streaks of white and black, and on her head shaggy tufts of Buffalo's mane, so as to add a wild unnatural horror to the cadaverous aspect of her withered form, the Enchantress stole forward with swift but noiseless tread.

From time to time, her pale blue lips were muttering incantations ;—sounds that seemed not words, and yet had intonations deep and sorrowful ; that sunk into the heart, and raised unearthly musings. A band of maidens now approached, as bound in duty, and would have clothed her with robes of the finest Lynx's fur, but sullenly she motioned them away, and still continued her moody mutterings and solitary march.

Within some fifty yards Makanna stood, tending on the young Dushani, whose senses were again suspended ; and here, for a while, the Enchantress paused in mute abstraction, while the inhabitants of the ' Umzi,' gathering

into irregular ranks, prepared to abide the fearful scrutiny about to follow.

Appalled with conscious guilt, or perchance grown doubtful as to the real power possessed by the object of her hatred, the remorseless hag yet lingered, although she felt as one standing himself secure on the brink of a yawning precipice, from which a touch would hurl his enemy.

This indecision was met by eager glances from the crowd, fast flashing into fierceness ; when, breathing deeply, and dilating every feature with fell remorseless energy, the Enchantress took a portion of white ashes from the shell of a small tortoise, slung at her neck, and scattered them into the air.

As if each separate atom had been the seed of some dire pestilence, the affrighted Amakossæ, on every side, dispersed, and stood remote, until the faintly breathing wind had wafted them into the dusky bosom of the night.

A thrilling interval ensued, and then, having emptied the remaining ashes into her thin bony hand, with a lingering howl, which, as her teeth continued clenched, seemed issuing from the earth beneath; and, with her fiery eyes half closed, as if she struggled with some smothered agony, the Enchantress glided round the circle.

As from group to group the spectral figure past onward, the boldest felt a creeping chill, as of a reptile's touch; the feeble shuddered, and, moaning in their fear, the women huddled close together, as doves affrighted by the falcon's scream.

Still on she past, and still, as yet, her withered hand retained the fatal ashes, that smite, wherever thrown, with death and infamy!

Partly kneeling, the better to sustain the head of Dushani, and, with his hand upon the young man's breast, to feel if still the heart, however faintly, propelled the vital

fluid, Makanna remained unconscious of the passing scene;—and it was even while thus absorbed, that the Enchantress unperceived approached, and, with a sudden blow, stamp'd the magic damning dust upon his head.

A wild tumultuous yell of alarm burst from the crowd; the Hag's deep fiery eyes gleamed with Sardonic joy, and, circling round, their weapons levelled at Makanna's breast, the warriors closed instinctively!—hushed in a silent awe, yet ready to fulfill the mandate, as they deemed, of an all commanding and resistless fate, they lingered yet a moment,—

Stand back, Sirs!—Back!—or yet, before you raven cloud hath parted, for the thunder-flash that loads its murky womb, the yawning earth will find a voice shall bid ye halt!—

“Stand back!—The air grows sulphury with a Demon's breath—Stand back, and give Dushani room to breathe!—I'll answer that anon!—The proof! the proof!”

Full of emotion, yet calm in its energy, the Chieftain's sonorous voice struck like a trumpet blast upon the half receding crowd ; at that moment, too, the indications of a storm, before unnoticed, and a sultry vapour steaming from the chasms of the earth, seemed the according evidence of the elements to his appeal.

The opinions of the Amakossæ began to waver, a hundred warriors surrounded the enchantress with gestures of imprecation, and a tempest burst of voices shouted for ' the Proof.' Maldrona felt that her existence now hung upon a hair ; yet as she had foreseen the revulsion of popular indignation, which was so likely to involve the accuser of Makanna, so had she prepared to meet it with no common address and cunning.

During the time which had been occupied in the celebration of the previous rites, her secret emissaries were busied in the circulation of such reports as might mould the

ignorant multitude to her purpose. The unexpected dying condition of Dushani, after he had so nearly recovered, conjoined with the gift of 'the charmed milk,' were facts which in themselves had nearly counter-balanced the popularity of Makanna. To these were soon added the more direct accusation of the distracted maid, who had been removed to a hut in the vicinity. The more reflecting remembered too, that the medicine so fatally concocted had been given to the youth by the fond maiden herself, so that any ideas of suspicion against the enchantress were soon discarded.

As these explanatory whispers were repeated from man to man, their vindictive glances towards the Sorceress subsided, and the demands for the Proof being more solemnly and respectfully made, they were attended to.

The accused was now left surrounded by the guard, who, if the challenge was re-

deemed, were to be, however unwillingly, his executioners, while the greater number followed the Enchantress to seek for 'the proof,' or buried 'umbootie,' (bewitching matter), which, if found, would substantiate his guilt.

Within a grove, to the right of the 'Umzi,' grew a majestic corallodendron, beneath whose shade Makanna was known to meditate for hours, and here, among its tangled roots, the Hag began to dig, but with more avidity than apparent success.

Her every motion was watched with anxious jealousy, by the friends of Makanna, who were, at first, obliged to admit that the ground did not betray any appearance of having been before disturbed, and who were eventually utterly confounded by the disinterment of a shrivelled human hand, as, according to the superstitions of the Ama-kossæ, no 'proof,' more unanswerable and fatal, could have been furnished.

The Enchantress having thus performed

the last of her stern duties, even to the letter, was now dismissed with presents. The women retired to a distance, as scenes of violence and blood were soon to follow, and the armed men, gathering in a dusky mass, awaited in sullen grief, but the decease of Dushani, to execute the necessary judgment on his supposed assassin.

A moment and the blow would have fallen, for Dushani, gasping convulsively, threw his head with violence from the supporting knee of Makanna, and lay motionless at their feet. They were indeed but awaiting for the second gurgling death-throe, as a signal to plunge their weapons in the bosom of the Chief, when the expanded veil of black cloud that shrouded the heavens parted swiftly, flowing flashes of lightning shed a deluge of fire over the horizon, and crash on crash, the thunder burst around.

“Dushani shall awake!—My Father’s Spirit told me this, as standing betwixt me

and the sun, without a shade, a form of radiant air, all life and power!—He bade me hail the thunder cloud for justice!

“Ay, ye dreaming dotards, Justice!—Dushani lives! why is your Chieftain then impeached?”

Again the bewildered crowd receded. In speaking of the ministry of his father’s ‘ulango,’ or shade, one of their favourite superstitions, and in appealing to the thunder, which they hold most sacred, Makanna had clothed himself with the armour of their strongest prejudices, and if the sacrifice of his life was inevitable, it was at least delayed.

Perhaps from the refreshing influence of the breeze, awakened by the late storm, or it might be, from the well-timed administration of some potent drug, (for the Chieftain had been observed crouching over the body of his friend), Dushani began to revive. In the former instance of returning animation, the

youthful warrior had merely opened his eyes, without any sign of renewed strength or consciousness, but now he not only knew those about him, but strove at times to speak; upon the whole, although his death was evidently near, yet he had rallied so far, that many hours might probably elapse before the event.

In this case, as it is considered the direct means of bringing some great calamity on the whole community, should a sick person die in the village, the first step was to remove the patient to a temporary hut, without its boundaries, and as it is the Amakossæ usage on such occasions, that, while the people at large may on no account approach the dying individual, yet that he should be attended to the last, by some dear friend or relative; the question now arose as to whom the care of Dushani should be confided.

The popular choice pointed towards his former nurse, the fell Maldrona, but when

her name was mentioned, Dushani shook his head, in token of dislike, and cast a look of such piteous distress and imploring eloquence towards Makanna, that the kind-hearted Chieftain proposed himself to perform these melancholy dues of friendship.

The eyes of the dying man glistened with their last light of joy, as Makanna pressed his hand in confirmation of his hope.

Nor did he repent his promise, although a friend even then whispered that his life would be required for Dushani's, and his own judgment told him that all evasion, or chance of escape, would then be over.

As sufficiently removed from the 'Umzi,' and in other respects well suited for the purpose, a temporary shelter of mats was erected in the grove, which has been previously mentioned.

To this spot Dushani was now removed, although against the protestations of the defeated Enchantress, who artfully insinuated

that his life was even now only prolonged by a charm, still more impious than any hitherto employed by the adverse demon; and that his dying pangs would, in proportion, be increased, when left under the sole care of Makanna.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Our Vicar still preaches that Peter and Poule
Laid a swinging long curse on the bonny brown bowl,
That there’s wrath and despair in the jolly black-jack,
And the seven deadly sins in a flagon of sack :
Yet whoop, Barnaby ! off with thy liquor,
Sweet Marjory’s the word, and a fig for the Vicar ! ”

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

“ Ah, me ! what perils do environ,
The man who meddles with cold iron ! ”

BUTLER.

THERE is a gentle sort of self-tyranny in the mere act of choosing, which is a foil to enjoyment. Who likes the old-fashioned compliment of,—“ Would you prefer this, or

had you rather take a little of that?" No, in the name of good-fellowship, 'an' if thou love me,' help me at once, and let the *bonne-bouche* come plumply and silently as a willing kiss in a dark night.

But whither points our simile? Verily, kind Reader, at the most humble of thy servants, who is here constrained to select, choose, and prefer. First, thou might very justly demand some account of what hath befallen the gentle Bertha, for was she not left in much peril, journeying forth into the wilderness, according to the machinations of that stern enthusiast, Drakenstein, and with no better guardianship withal, than the equivocal courage of Stunted Mic. And then, are not thy bowels yearning for Laroon, whose lonely slumbers were so fearfully scared by the ravening beasts of the desert. Nor the less assuredly are thy tender charities awakened in behalf of the poisoned Dushani; or for the self-doomed Makanna,

who watches with all-enduring friendship the faint ebbings of his dying breath.

Verily, in all these matters thou hast a claim for intelligence that cannot be gainsayed: but one hast thou forgotten, in whose house there is now perplexity, and a strife of eager voices, even in the snug domicile of thine old friend, Van Riesbeck.

“Duyvils an’ thunder!—Make fast the door.—Governor me, no governors,—shall a man’s house be his castle, or shall it not? Answer me that.”

“But Massa, tink!—If de sold’ee break all de wind’ee, who shall pay de money for de glass?”—said Zambo, with an ominous screw-up of the mouth, which would not have shamed a professor of political economy when enforcing the anti-social system of Malthus.

“Who will pay de money for de glass?”

Now the windows were barricaded; that

is, the shutters were carefully closed with bolts, bars, and all sorts of fastenings,—but it so happened that the afore-mentioned shutters did not reach to the tops of the said windows by the space of at least half a foot, a vantage that the assailants from without were not very likely to overlook. The event proved the fact, for not a second had elapsed before the butt-end of a musket came rattling through one of the upper lattices with a force that scattered the broken quarries like the fragments of an exploding shell.

Nothing daunted, the valiant Van Riesbeck immediately placed his sleek and ponderous person directly opposite to the breach, and, after a volley of Dutch oaths, sang out for a large vessel of boiling water, which Cousha had just removed from the fire.

“ Ay, ay! put it down gently, girl!— And heark’ee, Cousha,—reach me the big punch-ladle, an’ if they’re for peeping I’ll

swill the dust off their spectacles with what shall start their eyebrows like the bristles of a scalded hog !”

This scalding off of eyebrows might very likely in the next moment have been fearfully realized, for a young impertinent prig of a drummer having mounted on the shoulders of a comrade, had just then perched his chin on the denuded frame-work of the window, and Van Riesbeck was blowing aside the steam to get a better aim at his obtrusive visage.—Yes, the boiling missile had undoubtedly been discharged, had not the punch-ladle, then in full swing, received an unexpected jirk, which emptied half its pungent steaming contents into the gaping shoes of the engineer.

“’Sblood and fury !” roared the scalded Dutchman, as he capered around the room with the elegant attitudes of a bear on hot irons.

“Pest on’t ! the handle of the ladle’s

loose!—Quick, quick! reach me a mug! I'll blister that ugly fellow's snout into the colour of a German sausage yet!—A mug! a mug."

Zambo hurried off to furnish the weapon, but it so happened that Cousha did not exactly opine with her 'Meester' that the drummer had anything ugly about him. Half a glance, on the contrary, had satisfied the tender-hearted damsel that such a sparkling pair of sloe-black oglers were quite brilliant enough, minus the application of boiling water, and she had accordingly upset the ladle just in time to save them. Still the order for the mug was full of warlike menace, and the danger from the bubbling caldron as eminent as ever, when Cousha, determined not to be defeated in her pacific intentions, very demurely poured a ewer of cold water into its heated jaws.

If the fury of Van Riesbeck had been roused by the previous scalding, which he

attributed to accident, it was nothing to what he felt on finding himself so perfectly and unexpectedly disarmed. Actually foaming, like a hunted bull, the angry Dutchman dashed the iron pot, water and all, against the window, where it eventually proved most disastrous to his own pocket in the way which Zambo had predicted; and then, as the servants had prudently decamped, he threw himself into a chair, to await the coming event in sullen determination.

Whether the perfect silence which now reigned, inspired the assailants with the idea that some desperate expedient was in contemplation, or that they were wearied by the length of the siege, an attack of a far more serious character immediately ensued.

A second window was smashed, and a man throwing himself in at each opening, the heavy door was instantly unbarred, and in less than a second the room crowded with soldiers.

“ I’m main sorry, Mynheer,”—said the sergeant commanding the party, and who now stood quietly, as a man-milliner, before the indignant Van Riesbeck,—“ I’m main vext as I said afore, but orders must be stood to—tho’ the lads were rather too crank with the glass—but your door’s like the postern of a fort !”

“ Why, as for that”—replied the Dutchman, evidently mollified by the close of the sentence,—“ The door was always good enough before to-day to keep a rogue on the right side,—and if I’d not been tricked, the boiling water would have given your cockerels more blisters than fun at the windows :—but what o’ that !—here you are, and what d’ye want ?

“ Have ye a warrant, sirs, for this outrage,—or does the English Governor give ye leave to harrow and pillage the honest Dutch Burgomasters just for practice, sport, or free quarters, as ye list ?”

“ Why, as for warrants, and such like lawyer traps, they’re jist no better for a soldier than a wooden snapper in the field. If so be their Honours should chance for to have you hanged, Mynheer, niver doubt but that you’ll have proper satisfaction as to warrants, with all ‘ scollardship’ quite respectable, but all I sees o’ the matter is jist this:

“ The Colonel said—yes, his Honour said, says he—‘ I want Van Riesbeck at the camp before the van-guard marches.’

“ Now that’s by the turn o’ th’ night—and as for warrant, his Honour dropt no more than that you ‘ must be brought, smooth or rough, as the saying is!’—and so if you please, Mynheer, if quite agreeable like, seeing as how there’s no choice, we’ll jist be jogging in quick time for the camp.”

“ All very right, sergeant,” said Van Riesbeck, willing to make a virtue of necessity—“ All very right, but just tell your men to wait outside, and take a glass of ar-

rack yourself, while I pack up a few comforts for the march."

A request so reasonable, and so strictly in accordance with military usage, was of course acceded to, and while the sergeant drank his toddy, and smoked a prime havannah with measureless satisfaction, Van Riesbeck was equally diligent, in stowing out of sight every document connected with the illicit traffic he had so long carried on; and no less sedulous, in equipping himself with cordials and grog, for the warlike adventure before him. And above all things, in especial tenderness to the fat and sleek rotundity of his own delectable person, he took good care to be furnished with one of the Indian 'solahs,' or broad-brimmed pith hats so light and useful in hot climates.

These matters at length adjusted, the sergeant and Van Riesbeck with all good faith and external signs of amity, sallied forth for the Camp, the attending party moving,

as a mark of respect, at some distance in the front and rear, while Zambo followed at his master's heels, with a well stored basket, and a huge 'chattash,' or umbrella for the sun.

The camp alluded to, had been recently formed in the vicinity of Cape Town, at a place called the Cape Flats, for the purpose of collecting a considerable military force to act against the natives, whose inroads upon the colonists of the interior, were represented as becoming every day more frequent and alarming. The force here assembled was respectable as to numbers, and had attached some pieces of light artillery, with a body of mounted Hottentots, which, on occasion, might also be useful on foot as bush-rangers.

A walk of two hours brought the party, with the worshipful Van Riesbeck, into the Camp, and if the Dutchman was surprised at the sudden seizure he had experienced, he was still more so, at the evident anxiety

with which his presence was awaited, and the respectful consideration with which he was treated. As a token of the first, no less than three subordinate officers contended, as to who should first apprize the Colonel of his arrival; and of the second, he deemed it a sufficient proof, that, although the night patrol was set, he was immediately ushered to the tent of the commander.

On entering the markee, Van Riesbeck erected his person to its utmost altitude, and moulded his features into that glum pomposity, which vulgar men mistake for importance. His little twinkling eyes were indeed so far closed by the gathering of his forehead into the folds of *dignified* thought, that a minute or so had elapsed before he perceived, that of the three gentlemen who awaited his arrival, two were already old acquaintance, and that the third was a stranger, but not the commander-in-chief.

“Mynheer Van Riesbeck,”—said Captain

Daker,—“Major Falkland and myself would be sorry to put you to any inconvenience, but some particulars which transpired while we were lodging at your house, together with intelligence of a very important nature, which has been furnished by this gentleman, who has just arrived from the interior, has left us no choice:—You will, of course, feel it judicious to be perfectly candid and direct in your answers;—and, in the first instance, allow me to inquire as to your knowledge of a man, named Hugo Drakenstein?”

“Hugo Drakenstein!”—repeated Van Riesbeck, in an audible whisper, and with his fingers drumming slowly on the back of a chair, as if calculating some half-forgotten score in his own hostelry,—“Hugo Drakenstein!—why, every soul in the colony knows Hugo, the great cattle dealer:—and then the man bags a power o’ cash, and well he may, with such a rolling trade:—and a good customer, too, is Hugo with many an

honest man besides me at Cape Town,—that is, when his waggon's homeward bound.—‘Light come,’ say they, ‘light go!’—and no end o’ flimsy-flamsy finery for the women-kind; and elephant roers, fowling pieces, pistols, watch chains, and such gewgaws for the boys will old Hugo stuff under his waggon tilt;—not that it altogether consorts with a psalm-singing, sermon-noting body like him, that always raps ye out a text, just as a sailor turns his quid to be hankering after the vanities o’ the flesh, and the pride o’ the eye, but—

“Tush!—tush!”—exclaimed Captain Daker,—“What old wife’s fable have we here?—Trim your tongue to a full bearing at once on the truth, Sir!

“What has your psalm-singing, cattle-dealing friend done with Miss Falkland?—and what new office in the court of Beelzebub has he found for that Prince of mutineers, Laroon?”

“ I can give you nothing better than a guess at the matter :”—replied Van Riesbeck, —“ It’s no doubt true enough, Gentlemen, as I told you whiles gone, Drakenstein has had his dealings with the pirates of the Comoro Isles, and, if Captain Laroon should have joined company with the lads of the free trade, why, as I said whiles gone, there may be a chance !—But then, there must be no stint o’ the rhino :—Drakenstein is rich as a Jew,—and the nabbing such a roister as Captain Laroon, to say nothing of the Lady !—

“ Tush !—tush !”—cried Captain Daker,—“ the fellow’s all abroad again :—

“ Hark’ee, Mynheer, this story of the pirates is little better than a flam !—my old ship, the Ganges, was wrecked ; and Laroon and Miss Falkland have been sheltered, or, as I should rather say, secreted, for some time past, by that hypocritical trickster you speak of, and with whom, by the by, you’re

suspected, Sir, to have had more engagements than you are willing to avow."

"What!" cried the Dutchman, with a start of surprise, that left no doubt of his sincerity,—“What! has Hugo caged both birds, without so much as giving me a hint o’ the sport, and that too, for all his son Cootje was here, as I might say, but yesterday!—why then, Gentlemen, I guess there’s little chance for good in the matter.”

“My worthy friend,”—said Major Falkland, with a tone which betrayed how deeply his feelings were interested in the inquiry,—“I have no doubt of your fair dealing; but what can you mean by saying—‘there’s little chance for good in the matter?’—This gentleman, who was a fellow-sufferer from the wreck, and who shared the hospitality of Drakenstein, with my daughter, assures me that, until her strange departure on a journey, for which Hugo has refused to account,

nothing could exceed the respect, and even tenderness, with which she was treated."

"Respect and tenderness!—oh yes, there's little doubt o' that,—Hugo is always civil enough in serving himself!

"What say you, Sir,—a journey!—my life on't, then, no money will balk his fancy now—it's all as regular as if the Bishop of Calcutta had married them before your departure from India!"

The two elderly gentlemen looked at each other in blank astonishment, — but the younger, who was, indeed, no other than our friend Vernon, exclaimed, "Impossible!" —with more haste than confidence, while the trembling of his pallid lips evinced greater emotion than he seemed willing to avow.

"Oh yes, it's altogether improbable!"—rejoined Vernon,—Drakenstein is already married, and is far too grave and devout a man to nourish any improper idea on the subject."

The old officers smiled with reassured confidence, but Van Riesbeck, thrusting forward his great bull head, and fat wattled throat, with an overbearing sort of earnestness, dashed at once the cup of comfort from their lips, by adding,

“ Yes, the old un is as grave and devout as you please, and like enough has shed his last colt’s-tooth whiles gone,—but what say ye to the son ?”

Captain Daker whistled, as he was wont in a foul wind, when on the quarter deck of the Ganges. Major Falkland and Vernon exchanged blank looks of impatience, as if each expected the other to speak,—but in vain,—when with a twinkle of sly mischief lurking in his eye, Van Riesbeck continued—

“ Oh yes, Gentlemen, it’s all certain enough now—the son, young Drakenstein, is the very Duyvil for a pretty girl !—Not all the spiritual songs in William Sluiter’s ‘ Gesangen ’ (Psalm

Book), could ever sanctify him into a vessel o' grace, as his own father once confessed. Why, when he was last in Cape Town, and the ladies (bless their sweet innocent faces), were taking the air on the Grand Parade;—not an eye had Cootje for the balls on the signal post, tho' they were telegraphing three strange sail in sight!—oh no, your Honours—'twas a precious gale—and he must be watching the flutter o' the petticoats, with eyes glistening like a varnished picture, and cheeks red as the rampant lion on a sign-post.”

“Tush!—tush!”—growled Captain Daker, from betwixt his teeth, with the snarl of an enraged mastiff!

“Strike your fool's bunting, sir,—have you no feeling for a father!—look to the Major!”

“Why, after all,”—said Van Riesbeck, who was too good natured, to give pain willingly—“After all, I'm far from thinking that you'll find any thing more than's quite

correct, and altogether virtuous. As I said before, Drakenstein is a man of substance;—but let him be as rich as he may, he's prouder by half, so that having only one son, it's nothing strange that he should like to see him wed such a lady as Miss Falkland, and with such a fortune to boot; for little doubt is there, but he's had chapter and verse for that whiles gone. Well, and then for the son—you'll seldom meet a properer man,—an' if his blood's quick—something o' th' hottest—I expect nothing more than that if the lady's bashful, he'll make love first, and—”

“Gentlemen,”—said Vernon, interrupting him,—“I really think that this good man knows less of the matter than ourselves; Why then waste time,—our motto should be ‘despatch,’—every hour that we linger, may be fraught with danger to Miss Falkland.”

“Our time is fixed already, we move be-

fore day-break with the van-guard,"—replied Captain Daker,—“but as to the services of Mynheer, my opinion differs, I confess, totally from your own.—I not only think that he may probably know more than he now feels it convenient to communicate; but, that when on active service, we may find him a very desirable medium of negotiation with Drakenstein, for whose good behaviour, too, we may, perhaps, find a way to make him serve as a hostage, for after so many years of profitable barter, it would be strange, indeed, if they had not some bowels of commiseration for the misfortunes of each other.”

The going on active service, and the being in misfortune—were the only particulars which Van Riesbeck had clearly understood, and having a mortal antipathy to both, he cast his eyes towards the door of the tent, with the natural idea of bolting, if the coast was clear.

Right in the gape, at this moment, un-

fortunately stood a sentinel, and when Van Riesbeck's retiring glance settled on the group within, he saw at once, that the cause of his perplexity was sufficiently understood by the sarcastic smile that hung upon the lip of Captain Daker, who relieved his suspense, if he increased his distress, by observing—

“Come, come, Mynheer! we are brother volunteers on this occasion!—Not a word,—not a word!—you see we take the liberty of old friends with you; but, the fact is, we know rather more than you suspect! Perhaps, you have no very particular wish that this paper should pass into the hands of His Excellency, the Governor!”

Whatever the scroll contained, it had evidently all the effect of a talisman on the sulky Dutchman, whose repugnance to his present society seemed marvellously removed by its perusal.

Yes, yes, I thought”—rejoined Captain

Daker, laughing—"that a sojourn in the 'Tronk,' and the confiscation of the Vineyard, might be rather more unpleasant than the chances of a campaign; besides, so great a dealer in *gunpowder*, ought at least to bear his share in the dangers of a war, in which he may, perhaps, receive *personal* evidence, as to the excellence of his own commodity!"

"Never could bear the smell of gunpowder in all my life!"—exclaimed Van Riesbeck, with an involuntary shudder,—“It always gave me a sick head-ache, a pain in the loins, and a palpitation of the heart.

“For the love of Heaven, Gentlemen, if go I must, let me move with the baggage:—I don't mean with the rear-guard,—oh, no, take my simple word for it, the Amassosæ will tickle up the flanks and hind-quarters of the army, after a strange fashion, and I've been too wide in the waistband for a run, these five-and-thirty years!

“And besides, Gentlemen, though I say

it myself, you'll find I've some small skill in cookery, that might be a proper comfort to your inwards.

“Yes, to a certainty, you'll find me most useful with the baggage;—or indeed with the Staff, when the General's not in advance!—But as for fighting, or any personal violence, I'll tell you what, Captain, I've a scruple of conscience clean against anything of the sort.—I'll not volunteer for one halfpenny-worth of danger;—no, not I, let those be killed, who run the chance for ‘promotion;’ and remember, Gentlemen, if any such thing should happen to me, it would be altogether a regular proper murder;—and may God call you to answer it.”

“Well, well,”—said the Captain, as soon as the cachinatory convulsion, which Van Riesbeck's solemn adjuration had excited, was sufficiently subsided,—“Well, well, it will certainly be most judicious, that your *delicate* soul, and fat body, should have a

fair chance of remaining in loving conjunction,—until, at least, we recover Miss Falkland; and if, after that, Mynheer, you should, as you say, be *regularly* and *properly murdered*,—take notice, that I wash my hands of the affair; for, I rather expect that each of us will then be sufficiently busy on his own account.

“Holloa, Sergeant! show this Gentleman *Volunteer* to a tent,—and mind, Sir, that he is very *carefully* attended to.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Falstaff.—"It illuminateth the face, which, as a beacon, gives warning to all the rest of this little kingdom, man, to arm; and then, the vital commoners, and inland petty spirits, muster me all to their Captain, the Heart; who, great, and puffed up with this retinue, doth any deed of courage: And this valour comes of sherries. So that skill in the weapon, is nothing without sack!—If I had a thousand sons, the first human principle I would teach them, should be,—To forswear thin potations, and addict themselves to sack."

SHAKSPEARE.

"The Bushman sleeps within his black-browed den,
In the lone wilderness: around him lie
His wife and little ones, unfearingly,
For they are far away from 'Christian men.'
But he shall sleep no more! his secret lair
Surrounded, echoes to the thundering gun,—
He dies,—yet ere life's ebbing sands are run,
Leaves to his sons a curse, should they be friends
With the proud christian race, for they are fiends."

PRINGLE.

It was about some three weeks antecedent to the adventure of the last chapter, that the

waggon which formed the travelling equipage of Miss Falkland, (and which, by the by, was now alone, having for the last day been separated from its consort,) under the direction of the Hottentot driver, was drawn up for the night beneath the friendly shelter of some camel-thorn trees.

The 'unspanning' of the oxen was soon accomplished; and as the patient animals began to cranch the tender branches of the mimosas, growing on every side around in wild elegance, with their light yellow feathery ball-like blossoms, and milk-white juicy thorns, for a supper, the bipeds of the party heaped up the dry rushes and withered branches for a fire.

As the reader has already found, the night-fire is in several ways essential to the well-being of the travelling Africander; but in none is it more so, than for the purpose of cooking. The scorching sun, the smothering dust, the tugs, strains, gullies, and joint-dislocating jolts of the day, are all forgotten

when the savoury steam from the roasting haunches of a Spring-bok Antelope, or the spicy incense of a well-concocted stew curls gracefully around in fragrant evidence, that the rightful claims of empty stomachs have been lawfully regarded.

But when no such delicious viands are come-atable ; when the provision-chest of the waggon will furnish, at best, but a mess of insipid rice, with ‘ bill-tongues’ shrivelled by long keeping into dry black knobs of tasteless fibres ; or, perchance, a rusty junk of ‘ Zee-koe-speck,’ in which “ the maggots creep in, and the maggots creep out,” like rabbits in a warren, or the fleas in a Portuguese rug : then is it, that the Meester, and the Hottentots, run counter in all their arrangements ; and the snarling jabber from the hungry tawny throats on the one side, with hollow maledictions from the capacious void, an empty Dutch bread-basket, on the other, with yelping dogs, and frequent

crackings of the all-avenging sambok, form a concatenation of discords, that might affright a congregation of howling baboons.

On the present occasion, the fare was but little better ; there was indeed capital tea and coffee, with dates and biscuits, for Miss Falkland and Mage, but a lamentable lack of such substantials, as might satisfy the masculine appetites of the party.

The four Hottentots of the escort lay round the fire, toasting the soles of their feet in sullen apathy, except that now and then, one or the other of the dingy-tinted wags, by way of amusement, gave a hollow sounding slap on his digestive vacuum, that seemed on such an occasion far more eloquent than language. Quite as hungry, and infinitely more impatient, Stunted Mic now lingered near the waggon, where his unavailing repinings only served to disturb Miss Falkland, who was then engaged in reading ; or, sauntering round the fire, he scared the poor

oxen, teddered within the distance of a few yards, by ill-naturedly kicking the smoking embers between their legs.

As the shades of evening advanced, the more malevolent passions of the ex-slave-dealer seemed gathering with the darkness.

“Rot my heart-pumps!” cried the gray-headed reprobate, in a low melancholy growl; —“Why this job’s worse than boat-service in the Indies without shade or fresh water!

“What the plague made the old sermon-monger send me on such a fool’s cruize, with nothing but a woman for a cargo,—and a Jonas in petticoats, too, ha’ she been to me before to-day.

“A rare coil was there with her baby-face on board the Ganges, till the good ship was lost; and now, sink me all alive, if I’m not after thinking that the only chance would be to cast her bodily to those land-sharks, the Jackals, and then cut and run.—But what again signifies scuttling a ship

without getting out the plunder! As for any good from the mermaids on board, not a bacca-stopper would I give for the brace;—no, the hyænas may touzle them for me: I doubt there'll be but a scanty swag to pay for overhauling the waggon, either.

“Ods-rot-it! if a man had but the tawny carcasses of these four snoring Hottentot lubbers to sell at the Havannah slave-mart, there might then be some'at to fill a purse, but no better than dog's-flesh are they here.

“Well, after all, there's many a Free-booter leads a jovial life in this same outlandish country, and now's my chance for a fair-weather scud.—Old Square-jaws ha' given me a horse,—and as for any little pickings there may be in the waggon, mine they are to a dead certainty!—If quietly, that's so much the better; and if not, why zounds! the women sha'n't ha' th' trouble o' squealing twice, without their skins are proof 'gainst the point of a wittle!”

While thus gloating on the cogitations of his intended villany, the gloom deepened into night, and all surrounding circumstances seemed to encourage the remorseless miscreant in his infamous design. The Hottentots, too, one after the other, having rolled themselves round, like so many hedgehogs, in their woolly 'carosses,' had fallen into their first sleep. The diminished light that glimmered from the waggon seemed also to hint that the females had sought the consolation of their pillows; and the very horse, too, struck his hoofs impatiently against the iron ring which held his tedder, as if he understood the views of his late rider, and participated in his love of lawless enterprise.

Being by nature an arrant coward, Stunted Mic had but one way of fortifying himself for any unusual exertion, connected, however remotely, with even the chance of danger, viz.—by drinking. To elude sleeping men, and to pillage defenceless women, were in-

deed exploits of no very perilous character; but still the old mutineer felt it convenient to be valiant, and therefore prepared preliminaries for the solemn operation of toping. This being one of those things that could be done quietly, he had however first of all re-saddled his horse, and equipped him with two ample sheep-skin bags, to contain any little moveables of value, that might be nabbed by the robbery of the waggon.

Nothing now remained but to secure spirit 'quantum suf.' for the enterprise; and having seated himself on an empty keg, our hero unslung the huge buffalo's horn that constituted his magazine of brandy, and began to suck in the sparkling fluid with the rapt devotion of an old maid at a wedding.

Your raw recruit,—that is, if he has the chance,—will gulp down dram after dram as rapidly as a drummer rolls the revellie,—but an old campaigner, like Stunted Mic,

was too knowing at the joke to trip up his own heels, and never drank but with the decorum of a parson.

Between each successive suction of the horn,—and they were long, deep, and hearty,—the narcotic influence of a prime cigar gave a timely ebb to the excess of the spiritual excitement; yet still the tide of courage gradually rose higher and higher in the bosom of the ex-slave-dealer, until he felt his valour at full flood.

The edge of the long case-knife (wittle) had been cautiously examined; and, as a finale, the black horn, steadied by both hands, was delivering its last blessing to the capacious jaws of the would-be marauder, when his magnanimity was wofully disconcerted by the oddest of all incidents.

In the household of Drakenstein, under the capacity of a slave, resided an orphan boy, of some nine years of age. This child, who was of that singular diminutive race,

the 'Bosjesmans,' had been saved in a very unusual caprice of compassion by old Hugo, when the latter was engaged in a midnight attack on the mountain-cavern, in which the boy's father, and every other unfortunate inhabitant it contained were massacred.

Javan,* for such was the opprobrious name the child had received, in allusion to his heathen extraction, though arch and docile beyond his years, was very scandalously made the scape-goat in every domestic mishap: yes, and to such excess was this unprovoked malevolence carried, that no one-eyed, ugly, hearth-singed puppy, in a servants' hall, was ever more completely cuffed and kicked, from pillar to post, by the sleek-faced menials above him, than poor Javan, in the very devout and orthodox family of Drakenstein.

From the psalm-singing Meester to the

* From the Hebrew, signifying a deceiver.

snarling Hottentot butcher, whose very infirmities made him cross, for the ugly dog was minus an eye, and the left nostril, from an unlucky slip of his own knife in skinning a sheep,—yes, from the head to the tail of the entire household, Javan had to mourn equal indignities. But the boy did not mourn: grief and despondency were foreign to his nature; and yet the poor child was not indifferent to the unmerited misery of his condition, and if his young heart was too warm with dawning life, and elastic in its native energies, to sink benumbed with the pressure of sorrow, it nevertheless felt keenly the unkindness that so unceasingly strove to crush it, and concentrated all its emotions into a silent but ever increasing hatred.

The first sounds that Javan remembered were the agonizing groans of his kindred ;—and the rude hands of the stern Hugo, when they tore him screaming from the bosom of

his dying mother, were reeking and purple with his father's blood !

Perchance it was the gnawing recollection of those horrors, that had given a premature growth to his infantine faculties ; but however that might be, every day brought its unrequited injury, and the passion of revenge,—one, be it remembered, nearly allied to virtue in the breast of a savage, who knows no other form of justice,—gave to the young ‘ Bosjesman ’ a stoical fortitude, and a quickness of perception, which might have challenged a milder fate.

As the unrelenting foes of his race, and the ceaseless persecutors of himself, the glance of Javan never met the face of either Drakenstein, or any of his dependents, without betraying the restless annoyance of a chained wolf, that longs to bite and cannot. So had it been until Miss Falkland became an inmate in his master's house, when the very nature

of the boy seemed to undergo a change. The mild light of her benevolent eyes, beaming on the orphan in affectionate pity, awoke the dormant sympathies of human feeling:—his little heart glowed with gratitude at every indication of kindness, and she became the very sunshine of a life before all gloom! To crouch like a grayhound at the feet of his benefactress, to watch the slightest motion of her eye, and furnish to her hand the object that she wanted, before there was time to ask it, these were become Javan's only pleasures.

Perceiving its importance, the protection of Bertha became habitual; and, in defiance of divers remonstrances from Drakenstein, whose piety was sadly scandalized to see a 'christian' on such complacent terms with "the idolatrous spawn of those pigmy children of perdition," as he called the Bosjesmans, Javan became her constant and favoured attendant.

The duties of a page, to so unceremonious a mistress, were light indeed; and being, at her solicitation, relieved from his former drudgery, the poor boy had time for the playful gambols of his age. These were all gratefully dedicated to the amusement of his mistress, and the little fellow's ingenuity was in constant requisition to give them a variety that might attract her attention.

A coronet of Paroquet and Flamingo plumes was woven for her brow, that might have charmed an Indian Princess. And, once or twice, with the assistance only of a stone, to press upon its head, with the dexterity common to his race, he had seized and killed the fatal Puff-adder that endangered her path. But the pastime in which Javan principally excelled, and which appeared to amuse his lady most, was a sort of pantomimic exhibition of the national peculiarities of the 'Bosjesmans.' On these occasions, the miniature mimic of a man,

for he was as diminutive as active, would, in the character of a Warrior, fill his Lynx fur cap with a circle of arrows, and, armed with a bow, and a shield of hide, go through the evolutions of attack and defence, now bounding right and left, as if to avoid the aim of an enemy; and then creeping swiftly as the glancing light, and yet almost without a rustle, through the thorn-bushes, and long guinea-grass, like some predatory animal stealing on its prey.

One day, in the midst of a sport of this sort, the little urchin approached his 'Lady' with a strange mysterious air, and, having drawn her aside, exhibited an arrow, which she immediately recognised as a poisoned one, from having seen some of the same sort in the possession of Drakenstein, who had obtained them from the pillage of the Bosjesmans, in one of the exterminating expeditions which he had undertaken against that persecuted tribe.

“Father’s own arrow!”—said the boy, with eager vivacity, but still in a whisper, as if the matter were a secret,—

“Javan know where he shoot this, when he man!—Look, dear Lady, this sharp head made out of the hard thigh-bone of an old gray ostrich;—these pointed beards of quill stick fast in wound; and then so clever, head fit loose on reed, so when shoot in, no pull out!—ha, ha, ha!—shaft come off, bony spike, smeared with poison-juice, stop in,—stick fast,—rankle,—fester,—kill,—kill!”—And then, as if inspired with the anticipation of some delightful exploit, the boy laught, leapt, and shouted, in the wildest exultation.

Miss Falkland attempted to take hold of the arrow, which was so fearful a plaything in the hands of a child, and for which Javan seemed to have some fatal use, but in vain. For the first time disobedient to her commands, he eluded her by springing back

some feet, and then, running off among the underwood, was out of sight in a moment.

In the journey which Miss Falkland was now pursuing, Javan had been constantly in attendance; and, having been dismissed for the night by his mistress, the boy had advanced unperceived to warm himself at the fire, just in time to overhear the soliloquy of Stunted Mic:—it was uttered in the usual growling mumble of that worthy, but yet Javan understood it sufficiently to gather that something not very pleasant was contemplated towards his beloved Lady;—and the saddling the horse, and the proving of the edge of the wittle, were quite enough to confirm his surmises.

An English boy, on such an occasion, would have given the alarm by hollowing lustily, but with a young ‘Bosjesman,’ a course more indirect and crafty was a natural impulse. Having heard much of scenes of violence in the rude home of his adoption,

the first thought of Javan was, that Mic was about to murder his lady in her sleep, and, as the snoring Hottentots might not be very easily awakened, in time for effective assistance, he concluded that it would be best to engage the attention of the assassin, by the wound of an arrow or so, in the first instance, and to give the alarm afterwards.

It is only justice to acknowledge, that no fear of personal danger would have deterred Javan, young as he was, from defending the life of his 'Lady,' at any risk, but as "discretion," if not "the better part,"—is at least a very becoming accompaniment to valour, he resolved, in the present instance, to make the fire a rampart of safety, by taking a situation which placed it betwixt himself and the enemy.

Stunted Mic had, as was said, just taken, unobserved, as he supposed, and in perfect security, his last renovating swig, and with a coy reluctant tardiness, was withdrawing

the ponderous Buffalo's horn from his lips, when on looking accidentally across the fire, he saw, somewhat indistinctly, through the smoke, a pair of very small, but intensely bright eyes watching his every movement, with a sort of serpent gaze, that it seemed impossible to avoid ; while a second glance revealed a 'Bosjesman's' short bow, half drawn, and the point of an arrow, which, although he ducked his head like a half-choked owl, and then swung it right and left, after the fashion of an angry goose, still kept most provokingly on a delicate level with the ball of his left eye, in a way that would not have been very agreeable to a much bolder man, however fortified with brandy.

This renowned spirit proved indeed to Mic, in this, 'the hour of need,' but an equivocating Fiend, for while it kept him in a sort of fascination that prevented either retreat or defence, it warmed his fancy into a gross exaggeration of the menaced danger.

The poisoned arrows of the 'Bosjesmans' had ever been one of the greatest horrors of Southern Africa, in the estimation of the ex-slave dealer, and now in the confusion of the moment, while he only saw one, and that indistinctly, the coward actually imagined himself surrounded by a hundred.

The apprehension of being stung to death in slow torments, now fastened on his affrighted fancy, and when at last, trembling in every limb, he closed his eyes in utter dread; it was not very gratifying to think, what a spectacle his unfortunate corpse in a few hours might present, when variegated with black, green, and yellow, from the 'leporous distillment' of the venom, and puffed up into the hollow, hideous rotundity of a drowned hog.

The idea was altogether intolerable; and at last, groaning audibly, the self-defeated poltroon sunk from his seat into the ashes.

Now to fall discreetly, has even been

deemed a useful accomplishment by theatrical people, and perchance by some others, but be this as it may, the tumble down of Stunted Mic was followed by no very agreeable consequences to the nearest Hottentot, whose short-ribs were nearly broken in by the unwieldy cumbersomeness of his nether-bulk.

“Whoo-ha ! whoo-ha !”—snorted out the bruised Hottentot, and his tawny skinned comrades, yet scarcely awake, joined heart and soul in the chorus :—“ Whoo-ha ! whoo-ha !”

On starting to their feet, no sufficient cause of alarm was visible, and yet two of the youngest, who had slept with their guns in their hands, and whose duty it was to have guarded the encampment in the ‘ watchful ’ capacity of sentinels, fired in the air, as a proof of their vigilance, and then began abusing the others for the confusion the previous unmeaning shouts had occasioned.

Thinking, like Falstaff, that the ground might be considered the safest post in a *mélée*,

Stunted Mic now lay as quiet as a wet-quaker, after the third bottle,—but when the stir had subsided, and friendly voices were only to be heard, he thought it a fitting time to be valiant, and accordingly rising on his knees, as a discreet preliminary to any further demonstration of personal activity, he began flourishing his cutlass, and huzzaing, as if himself the victor in some brilliant achievement.

The false alarm having left the Hottentots in no very delectable mood, these cheers were mistaken for an insult, and their author had accordingly to endure the execrations and mockery of the whole party. Now, the habits of slave-dealing had given Stunted Mic the most ineffable contempt for every tint of complexion below the European, and nothing, therefore, could exceed his surprise and indignation at their presumption! His own sinister intentions were forgotten in the irritation of the moment, and but that the

Hottentots were better equipped than himself, having fire-arms, they had undoubtedly felt the edge of his cutlass. As it was, when the splutterings of rage had sufficiently subsided to render his vociferations distinct, he gave them to understand, that they would all have been massacred to a man, had it not been for his individual prowess.

“ Yes, you hulky dreamy mongrels !”—cried the redoubtable Michael—“ Yes, there they stood by dozens in a rank, grinning like mad, with their poisoned arrows drawn home !—but not a shaft did they venture—no, no, they knew better !—for just then, sword in hand, out stept I for a lunge !—no, no, like thieves from a rattle, or larks from a hawk, all was hurry-scurry for a whole head and a light pair of heels ; why, they ran twenty ways at once, as you may see the rats from the foundations of a corn-stack. Not that they got off altogether scot-free either—my wind is plaguy short, yet, for all that, I

managed to prick up some of their tawny flanks to a merry tune, as floundered a-head like so many empty mackerel craft in a staggering gale, they scampered to the bushes!"

"Ha!—ha! but where's de blood?"—remarked one of the Hottentots, pretending to look wistfully on the sand, and speaking in a dogged incredulous tone.

'Ay, an' de hors'ee too,"—said another—"did de beast'ee saddle himself?"

"Pooh—pooh!"—rejoined Stunted Mic, with unabashed confidence in his own facility of lying—"Pooh—pooh!—the ugly ill-favoured varment were so thin, that you might hear their very bones rattle loose in their skins:—Not a sheep, I'll swear, had they nabbed this five weeks.

"Blood, indeed!—Feed them first, and then, mayhap, you might chance to get a show of claret from their husky leather hides, on hard pricking—but now,—faugh!"

"Vel, but de Hors'ee?"—said the second,

with the most provoking iteration,—“The Hors’ee?”

“Hey!—What!”—cried Stunted Mic, with a ghastly grin, for at that instant the shrill querulous laugh of the boy Javan, then in close conversation with one of the Hot-tentots, explained the cause of his late alarm but too clearly, and seemed ominous of present mischief.—“The Horse!—why, what could a man do better than saddle him ready for a chase!”

“Yes, to hunt de Bosjesmans by de moonlight, an’ stow a brace of dare ittle dumpling ‘squaws’ in de saddle bag’ee—dat it, Masse, ey?”—was the reply, in a jeering tone, that confirmed Michael’s suspicion, that the secret of his intented violence was, he knew not how, but already discovered.

The poor child was still laughing at the braggart’s intolerable gasconade, with more zest than prudence, when, with the hope of

intimidating others, and avenging himself, Stunted Mic made a rush, cutlass in hand, to cut him down.

So unexpected and sudden was the assault, that the descending blade was within a foot of Javan's neck, before the child had any idea of his danger; but no sooner had his quick glancing eye caught the glitter of the weapon, than as if instinctively, his limbs and body shrunk at once together on the ground, and then, with a sudden lateral spring, he bounded like an elastic ball between the legs of the nearest Hottentot, and in the next moment, screaming like a Peacock, the youngster was running at full speed towards the shelter of the waggon.

This midnight hubbub had long since disturbed Miss Falkland and her attendant; and Mage had just now completed her toilet, sufficiently to venture out under convoy of a couple of large wolf-dogs, which, with pru-

dential foresight, the timid maiden had long made her principal pets—"to see what was the matter."

The ladies of Southern Africa may perchance evince as much graceful agility in descending from their travelling wains, as one of our own sweet belles in stepping from her chariot. In both instances experience, undoubtedly, bestows an inimitable finish, a certain *je ne sçai quoy*—and a pretty foot, and the elegant turn of a silk-enveloped ankle, may appear with all decorum and some advantage. Mage had not been without some little practice in this way on the journey, but yet withal, on the present occasion, between the hurry of the alarm, and the want of assistance, if a handsome leg was in no danger of fracture, it became so far involved by a coil of the harness, that its dainty proportions were revealed to an extent, that summoned successive blushes to the cheeks of its lovely owner.

As the sweet consciousness of a blush implies some involuntary peccadillo, so its passing confusion is allowed to exonerate a woman, or, rather, to render her insensible of any little indiscretion at the moment of its existence. Thus in the effort of extrication, Mage fell into a second dilemma, and just as Javan approached, being suspended in the provoking way alluded to, she unfortunately forgot that the boy was not strong enough to sustain half her weight, and throwing her extended arms upon his shoulders, it so happened, that both descended with a gentle roll into the guinea grass beneath.

At this juncture, foaming with rage, and breathless with a speed beyond his wind, came Stunted Mic, and regardless of all consequences, the ruffian's first effort was, to drag his shrieking victim from under the disordered drapery of the discomforted Mage, when her faithful dogs, concluding that the boisterous attack was intended for their mis-

tress, fastened one at the sword-arm, and the other at the throat of the assailant.

Half throttled, overthrown and powerless, Stunted Mic now lay bellowing loud as a buffed bull, until the Hottentots came to his rescue, and then he had the *pleasure* of finding himself a prisoner, not only to secure the safety of Javan, who had slunk out of sight, but, to await the decision of Miss Falkland as to his future destination.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Yet—yet, I pray you, to obtain for me
That I once more return unto my home,
Howe’er remote the period. Let there be
A point of time, as beacon to my heart,
With any penalty annex’d they please ;
But let me still return.”

THE TWO FOSCARI.

UNWILLING to participate in so rude a scene, Miss Falkland had hitherto kept entirely aloof ; but now the alarming intelligence which reached her ear relative to the outrageous conduct, Stunted Mic would have compelled her to have exercised with promptitude the authority she held over the party

forming her escort, had not an unexpected incident relieved her from so disagreeable a responsibility.

The separation of herself and followers from the family of Drakenstein, although it appeared at the time, to result from the accidental choice of a doubtful track between some woods, was, in fact, a contrivance on the part of the Dutchman to prepare her for the surprise and mortification which he foresaw his plan must ultimately occasion. He was also anxious to avoid any unnecessary intimation of the design in view to his own household, and had only explained himself just as far, as was at the time absolutely needful to the driver in Miss Falkland's party.

After the uneasy suspense which this separation was likely to excite, Drakenstein considered that his captive (for such indeed she was) would be in a state of mind sufficiently subdued to receive with patience any

communications he might vouchsafe to afford, and that for the future, that when obedience was no longer a matter of choice, it might become the more willing.

With this view, having on the previous evening seen his comely Vrouw, (whose ministry in this affair he was by no means desirous of obtaining,) fairly in motion on the homeward track, he was himself following the party in advance, and indeed resting for the night within a short distance, with the intention of seeking an interview with Miss Falkland in the morning, when the alarm of the Hottentots made him anticipate his design by some five or six hours.

Stunted Mic had hardly been relieved from the gripe of the dogs, and was still swearing and howling by turns with pain and vexation, when the snorting shouts of the Hottentots told that they had some new object in view, and presently the dark massive figure of Drakenstein, mounted on his

favourite black horse, and at full speed, might be seen descending a gully from the hills. A few seconds, and old Hugo had dismounted, and was indeed in the centre of the party.

The treachery of Stunted Mic was soon explained, and Drakenstein was directing the mode of his being lashed to a tree, preparatory to some preliminary torture, when he was apprised by Mage, that her lady wished earnestly to speak with him.

The object of Miss Falkland in seeking this conference was to intercede for the prisoner, whose life was in much greater jeopardy than it had been on some far more guilty occasions. With this benevolent view she had spoken long, and with little effect, for the extreme rigour with which Drakenstein had been wont to punish his domestics, rendered it more difficult to grant her request than she was prepared to expect,—and after all her advocacy, earnest as it was,

had been in vain, had he not remembered the unpleasant negotiation that was so soon to be opened with herself.

“Then let the felon live, though it be but to sin the deeper!” cried Hugo, impatiently;—“the brand of Cain is on his brow; he thirsteth for innocent blood.—Yea, it were safer to lie in the bed of nakedness with a vexed serpent, slaving thick venom, than to travel with one so black at heart. But let it pass:—thy word shall be as a ransom for his life. Yet Lady, remember, he must remain with me: the perils of thy path were before more than sufficient.”

The mind of Bertha had borne up gallantly under what appeared the unavoidable evils of her destiny. And since the separation from her father, at no time had she entertained such sanguine hopes of a restoration to his arms as when sheltered in the house of Drakenstein. Her implicit faith in the honour of Laroön would not allow her

to doubt his assurance that Major Falkland had been received in safety on board the Goshawk; and as that ship was appointed to cruise off the peninsula of Southern Africa, she conceived, very judiciously, that a journey to the Cape was all that was requisite for the termination of her exile.

Perhaps, too, the quick succession of stirring adventures in which she had participated, and her desire to penetrate the chivalric mystery that enshrouded the character of Laroon, had kept her in a state of too much excitement for the growth of ennui. Thus the bloom of health still shed the rosy light of love, with the soft witchery of her smiles, and still the gay buoyancy of her step had accorded well with the endearing cheerfulness of her voice.—Yes, Bertha had been all herself, until this fatal journey.

A fond enthusiasm for the beauties of landscape had hitherto been among the trea-

sured resources of her girlish delights; and the sacred sympathies breathing in the ever-changing vicissitudes of nature, when in the depths of solitude, hitherto, had been to Bertha, even as the voices of kindred and the whispers of affection.

But the charm had lost its potency: scenery magnificent in its wildness, or redolent in the beauty and fragrance of ever varied foliage, and unnumbered flowers, was now beheld with the apathy of an infant gazing on a map, for the only idea that lingered for a moment in the bosom of Miss Falkland, was, that, as if without a purpose, she was unwillingly constrained to wander in a direction opposed to her hopes, as with every league was increased the distance from Cape-Town, and from her Father.

As fairest flowers fade the quickest, so are the most gentle natures blighted soonest; and it was saddening to remark, the change

which two brief days of unrelieved anxiety had produced in the appearance of Miss Falkland.

Yet was there much of beauty left; and as clear still waters seem self-luminous in the refractions of their crystal depths, so a liquid light of sweet intelligence still lingered in her glance—but the flashes of sparkling gaiety were no more.

Her lovely cheeks, too, had felt the chilling touch of sorrow, and the sunset-glow which before had warmed the gazer's heart to thoughts of passion, was exchanged for a soft pale saintly hue that startled with its monumental coldness. Her very attitude even now was drooping, while, as if desirous of concealing the emotion that subdued her, she stood apart from the moonlight, beneath the shadow thrown from the umbrellated head of an isolated camel thorn tree.

Miss Falkland had listened to the address of Hugo without surprise, as she was ac-

customed to his metaphorical language, until in remarking, that the prisoner should remain behind, and that the perils of her path, without so dangerous a companion, would be sufficient, he seemed to imply her separation from his family, in a way that puzzled and alarmed her.

“It is even so!”—said Drakenstein, in answer to a direct remark on the subject.—“It is even so!—why should the truth offend?”

“That question has no relation to the cruel desertion of which you expect me to be the uncomplaining victim,” replied Bertha, bitterly.

“Wilfulness, Lady, can but serve to squander time:—rather should you listen kindly, for my counsel would be that of friendship. Listen.

“I foresaw that a cloud, dark with trouble, was fast gathering, doubtless as a judgment over this idolatrous land:—and as a fair

woman, being a stranger in the day of violence, might be regarded only as a spoil, when the hand of the strongest was in power, and the voice of her supplication would no more avail, than the babbling of those bright gleaming waters trickling through the reeds:—Foreseeing this, I concluded that concealment in the wilderness for a season might be well.”

“But granting that there was any probability of such a danger,—why this clandestine removal—and why—oh why was I not informed of the intention in time to have received the advice of my friends, of Mr. Vernon—of Laroon?”

The hesitation, and down-cast eyes of Bertha, in pronouncing the latter name, were not unnoticed by the wily Drakenstein, who craftily determined to render her feminine delicacy subservient to his interest.

“Alas!” said he, “would it not have been but a stirring up of strife;—yea, and

of much anxiety:—the youth Vernon, though cautious over much, lacketh experience;—and the Captain, a man of device and of a fiery bearing, to whom danger is ever as a pastime!—would he have consented to have hidden himself in the green woods, when the clangor of weapons re-echoed from the valleys! or would he have entrusted the lady of his love to the guardianship of another?”

“ Even granting all you would imply,”—said Bertha, blushing deeply, but recovering courage from the consciousness that these free, uncalled for allusions, were only intended to over-awe her,—“ even granting that all this might be so, was it generous, was it just, to leave my own wishes and feelings entirely unconsulted?—Or thus to entrap me into a situation still more remote from Cape Town, on reaching which, as you yourself have formerly observed, the only chance of my ever rejoining my Father may depend!”

“ The tidings of the danger came sud-

denly:—and it was a secret too, that then, it had been perilous only to have whispered: And again, as to Cape Town, is not the tide of the war rushing even now from that refuge of vanity, as if 'twere from the sulphur-pit of evil!”

“ I fear,”—said Bertha, advancing into the moonlit space where Hugo was standing, and with a searching air of command, that gave unwonted dignity to her beauty—“ I fear, Mynheer Drakenstein, that there is more in this matter than the wit of a weak woman is expected to unravel.

“ If the ‘ tide of the war,’ as you term it, comes from Cape Town, are not the British troops advancing through the colony?—and what could I obtain, or hope for better, than the escort of my gallant countrymen in seeking for my Father?”

Hugo had hitherto listened to her reproof with a motionless and stern apathy, but now, when she paused, as if he felt the necessity,

but was at a loss for a reply; he turned aside his head, and wrapping his horseman's cloak still closer, receded a few steps, and then stood musing in silence.

"In a matter already understood, is an honest answer so difficult?"—remarked Bertha, with a woman's quickness,—but immediately after added, with a faltering tone and mournful solemnity, while her starting tears glistened in the moon-light.

"The meaning is but too plain!—let the reason be what it may;—your intention is doubtless to detain me in these wild solitudes until every chance for my return to Europe will be past."

"There is no such thing as chance in the world:"—said Drakenstein, in a sort of involuntary soliloquy, and wandering unconsciously into the metaphysical subtilties that often perplexed his brain.

"There is no such thing, it is a delusion of the Evil One!"

“At least,”—replied Miss Falkland,—“if there is no ‘chance’ in the present affair, there is the greater guilt!—The future happiness of my life has been compromised, and perchance, destroyed, by those who possess not the slightest pretence for their daring interference.”

“What boots this wilfulness!—instead of repining, Lady, should ye not rather rejoice, that your safety hath been watched for, by one, whose in-comings and out-goings are according to the teachings of Grace:—Yea, of one, who hath wrestled for thee, ungrateful as thou art;—yea, with the strong prayer of the spirit in the deep night, when thine eyelids were heavy with the early sleep that lulleth human vanity!

“Oh, alas!—the tars of a worldly will!—The waywardness and doting carnality that sprout up on every side in the green valleys of youth!”

And then quite absorbed by the wild

enthusiasm that so often possessed him, the voice deepened, and the form of Drakenstein seemed to dilate with the fervent emotions that hurried him away as he continued.

“What, shall the Cedar of Lebanon be expected to bend and crouch, as doth the willow, because of the sobbings of the wind?—Shall the Elder, whom time hath seasoned with a wearisome probation in a wicked world,—shall he be schooled by a girl of yesterday! whose cheek is tender as the rose-leaf, and whose fancy is unstable as a vapour!

“Nay, speak not yet.—What wouldst thou arraign!—If it be written that thou shalt rejoin the aged officer, thy Father, shall it not be so!—then why is there a coil of words?

“Nay, weep not,—for again, if it be written that thy sojourn in the Wilderness should be prolonged,—and that for any cause we wot not of, the companion I need not

name, for that blush sufficeth, should be removed;—even then, if a child of Grace, shouldst thou not be satisfied, remembering that life has the same duties in every clime, and that to suffer much, may be the greater blessing.”

“I shall remember,”—replied Bertha, as audibly as her sobs would allow;—“I shall doubtless remember, that unprincipled and relentless cruelty may assume the outward robe of sanctity!”

“I protest,”—said Drakenstein, in a far warmer and more natural tone,—“I solemnly protest—”

“No more! no more!”—exclaimed Bertha, in whose bosom indignation had gained the mastery.—“Not a word, although deprived of protection by your treachery, and devoted to no purpose of honour, or why is it not avowed; yet still, Mynheer, I bear a spirit stronger than your tyranny, which, let me

caution you, may prove inefficient as your hypocrisy.

“No, not a word,—add not again insult to injury; this parting may be our last, and if so, remember, that although a weak woman may but forgive and suffer—there are those who may exact a fearful retribution;—Those to whom vengeance may be even as the love of life!”

“Vengeance is more than life!”—responded a shrill small voice, as if it had been a distant echo.

Drakenstein and Miss Falkland both turned towards the sound, when the former encountered the eyes of the boy Javan, glaring upon him with a fiery vindictive eagerness, from the dark hollow of a rifted rock, where, with the head betwixt the knees, the pigmy figure was ensconced, as if the guardian Gnome of some deep winding cave that opened to the bowels of the earth.

“What ! is’t not enough to be taunted without reason—but that the very spawn of perdition should make a jest of the righteous !

“As I live,”—cried Drakenstein, grinding his teeth together,—“but I will smite the young dragon in his hole.”

If words could slay, it had been all over with poor Javan. As it was, however, although the incensed Hugo made after him with the strides of a giant, not a chance for a shot would the boy permit him to obtain. At first rolling on the earth, the youngster dived under the bushes, and then bounding off, slunk for shelter behind the boles of a scattered grove, and some mammocks of rock, until at last he was fairly out of sight.

During this adventure, Miss Falkland had retired ; and when the Dutchman returned from his bootless chase, he found his levee attended only by the Hottentots ; who,

having been surprised by his unexpected arrival, were desirous of obtaining his orders for the future.

The travellers having now proceeded so far, that a day or so might be expected to bring them to the native 'Umzi' which was their destination, Mynheer Drakenstein felt it judicious to be rather more explicit than before, in his directions. The orders were as usual, mixed up with no very gentle intimations, as to what might prove the fruits of disobedience, if in a tittle they were disregarded, while, what was very unusual, the Hottentots were promised a reward if in every jot the wishes of the 'Meester' were carefully fulfilled.

The matter in itself seemed indeed so simple, that no mistake could easily arise. First, there were divers presents to be delivered from Drakenstein to his friends, the Chieftain, and other leading warriors of

the horde. Secondly, protection for Miss Falkland and her attendants, was to be solemnly claimed until Drakenstein should himself visit them. Thirdly, in case the Umzi was in danger of an attack, the Hottentots were immediately to retreat with their fair charge, in a north-east direction,—and as a general ‘memoranda,’ they were especially informed, that as it was of the ‘utmost moment’ that no European should approach Miss Falkland, they were at all hazards, to prevent such intercourse, if the opportunity unexpectedly occurred; but, in all other respects, to study her comfort, no less than her safety.

Having despatched this business, and feeling that any further attempt to tranquillize the fears, or conciliate the favour of Miss Falkland, would be vain, except at the expense of more candour than was compatible with the motives that prompted the measures

on which he had ventured ; Drakenstein, who, from his own uneasy reflections, had forgotten Stunted Mic, remounted his black horse, and, hurrying off, was soon concealed amid the still prevailing shadows of the night.

CHAPTER X.

“ I linger yet with Nature, for the night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man : and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learn'd the language of another world.”

MANFRED.

“ Let it work,
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petard ; and it shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon.”

SHAKESPEARE.

WE had left Laroon in no very enviable situation ; the midnight convocation of Hyænas had been somewhat abruptly balked, after licking their chaps in anticipation of a feast more delectable than usual ;—but

was it only for a time?—the snarling sere-nade that the grisly felons still maintained, sounded too like a requiem to be pleasant in the dark and the hollow moaning, that rose and fell, like a chorus in the wind, and seemed to hint that their ravening maws were as empty as ever.

With such music in his ear, we cannot wonder that the lonely traveller, though sorely wearied with the toils of the past day, and anything but refreshed by the broken sleep and hideous visions of the night, still thought it best to watch out its few remaining hours. This dreary interval of suspense and danger, at length, however, expired, and with the first faint glimmer of the dawn, Laroon recommenced his adventurous expedition.

The hours of early morning, in the mountainous districts of Southern Africa, are often attended with a thick steaming haze, that renders the features of the surrounding

landscape more or less distorted and indistinct. One of these perplexing vapours now prevailed, and, as with the increasing warmth of the rising sun, it became more and more palpable, Laroon found himself, at last, entirely confined to the guidance of his pocket-compass. The country now traversed, consisted of a down-like expanse of table-land, yet so bewildering was the mist, that he was obliged to pick his horse's path with extreme care, and indeed often to dismount on account of the variety of unforeseen obstacles that every half-hour presented.

This blindman's-buff sort of peregrination had continued for some time, when, from the occurrence of numerous water-gullies, and ledges of naked rock, it became apparent that the perils of a mountain pass were soon to be encountered. Still more slowly and warily, therefore, the horseman urged his way, until, halting suddenly, the horse strangely refused to advance another step.

On looking around, a dusky mass, whether of trees or of rock, the fog rendered it impossible to say, rose abruptly to the left; below, the earth was covered with the entangling roots of stunted thorn bushes, washed bare, and parched to a bone-like whiteness; while, immediately in front, and to the right, closed in an impervious veil of dense gray vapour.

Seeing no direct propriety, in this unexpected demur, Laroon would have urged his horse forward, but the ungracious animal, seizing the bit betwixt his teeth, laying back his ears, and stretching out his neck, set all the expedients of rough-ridership at utter defiance.

As the horse was neither obstinate nor restive, it was natural to presume that this manœuvre was not without some sufficient meaning, and Laroon slipt off the saddle to reconnoitre for the cause of so unaccountable a vagary. He still held the bridle in his hand, and it was well that he did so; for

scarcely had he moved a single yard in advance, when he found himself tottering on the verge of a precipice, and without that stay had hardly recovered a safer footing; it was evident, indeed, that the quicker senses of the sagacious animal had saved the lives of both.

In such a dilemma, the only prudent course seemed to be on the recent hint of the horse, to remain in statu quo, until the drifting off of the fog might render the surrounding objects more distinct. In these exposed situations, atmospherical phenomena are often sudden and violent, and it was not long before Laroon had reason to apprehend, that, with all his precaution, one danger was only exchanged for another.

At first, a breathing of air, creeping along the surface of the ground, and as yet so faint, that the thin fern leaves scarcely trembled with its whispers, was the only indication of the approaching change. By degrees, this

current began to descend in greater volume and increasing velocity, the light sand from the rocky crevices drifted like hail before it; the trailing briers clashed together, deep hollow moanings sounded from the unknown depths below,—and ever and anon, a wild impetuous blast came rushing roaring onward, with a whirling force, that made it necessary to cling to the tortuous roots and rocky crags for support.

As yet, the concussions of the air seemed but to augment the density of the vapours, as if their shadowy stores were congregated into a focus, while black eddies of sand spread overhead a canopy of darkness.

Fierce snatching squalls now beat tremendously around; and presently, torn with their force, the vapoury shroud seemed parting into cloudy shreds, and then again, their fury past, rolled forward in one contiguous gloomy mass.

These surge-like heavings of the elements

betokened that the storm would soon subside ; and, in the mean time, nothing could be more sublimely beautiful than the scenery, at momentary intervals discovered.

Above, beneath, on every side revealed, and lost, as the shadowy veil was rent and reunited, swiftly as the illusions of the fabled magic glass, stupendous rocky heights, terrible in gaunt overhanging masses, rifted crags, and shadowy caverns frowned on the eye,—and then, as the vapoury curtain collapsed, were vanished :—As suddenly through some new aerial chasm, glowed luxuriant sun-lit valleys, rich woods, and plains, and streams, all smiling far beneath, in one bright-tinted gay perspective, mellowing away into a luscious, soft, and dreamy distance.

There was something so enchanting in thus snatching, as at random, and enjoying too, with a momentary possession, the varied magnificent and glowing charms of Nature,—even as the Eagle gazes on them through a

canopy of cloud, that Laroon almost forgot that he had been all the while clinging in jeopardy of life ! on the ledge of a precipice ; and perhaps regretted that, as the danger subsided with the gale, so also departed the romantic interest of the scene. The dispersed vapours now fast melted before the sunbeams, and the entire landscape, beautiful as it was, seemed not half so fair, as when the veil of uncertainty rested on its bosom.

Whatever the view had lost in its poetical associations, Laroon very shortly discovered that it had gained a feature of far more substantial interest, in the faint wreaths of smoke drifting over the shadowy defiles of a distant forest, and indicating the situation of the ‘ Umzi,’ which was the object of his search.

“ Another day of toil,” said the traveller to himself,—“ and the wish I have so long entertained will probably be gratified :—but, perchance, at what expense !—May not this dangerous Chieftain, this unknown Makanna,

when all is adventured, betray me with a word? And then what follows?—Fetters and death, or little better, the hunted outlaw's fate in hourly jeopardy!—the last the worst. To live, were still to love, and that without a hope for love to rest upon."

These were no very agreeable cogitations, and forgetting his own restless over-reaching ambition, Laroon cursed bitterly the revolutionary spirit of the Dutch Boors, which had 'allured' him, as he termed it, into so perilous an enterprise.

Under every consideration, he foresaw that the utmost precaution was requisite, and with this view concluded that the 'Umzi' should be approached in some disguise that would render a retreat easy, if, on an interview, the character of Makanna appeared dangerous, or any circumstance arose uncongenial with his ulterior project.

This cautious plan, the more it was reviewed, seemed the more indispensable; but

the difficulty was, as to how it might be accomplished, and as the day waned, he had even advanced to the near vicinity of the Umzi, as destitute as ever of any feasible contrivance for its execution. What our most sedulous endeavours have failed to achieve, 'accident' may realize, and that in a moment seemingly the most untoward.

The shadows of night had so far encompassed evening, that flashing showers of sparkling fire-flies began to fill the low damp leafy coverts, while, although a dash of crimson lingered in the west, the sheen of the rising moon, touching the foliage of the highest trees, gave a silvery outline to the forest.

Such was the hour when Laroon, having left his horse at some distance, was approaching the outskirts of the Umzi, and at last, grown weary of thought, and indeed hopeless of finding any expedient that might account for his presence in an advantageous

way, he resolved, as a stranger, to claim the hospitality of the natives.

With this view, Paul had advanced so far, that the dusky roofs of some of the 'inhlu' (cabins) began to peep out from among the flowery underwood, and the smoke of the nearest, as it hung heavily in the night air, felt sultry, when he began to entertain surprise, at the total absence of any token of that cheerful hilarity for which the gay-hearted native tribes of Southern Africa are remarkable.

The death-like silence that prevailed could only be ascribed to some recent calamity; and as it is generally considered impolitic to accost a savage in such a mood, Laroon deemed it best to postpone his visit until the morning, and therefore immediately forsaking the beaten path, to avoid any chance of observation, he passed hastily into the more deep and solemn shades of the forest.

With every step, the gloom from the surrounding foliage grew more complete, and at last settled into a blackness, that seemed solid from its intensity; but as the bushes beneath had been cleared away to some distance from the 'Umzi,' the danger to be apprehended from wild beasts was so far diminished, that Laroon walked confidently on, with the intention of groping out some tree of easy access, in which he might pass the night with greater safety.

He had just found a venerable stone-pine, whose thick-grown lateral branches promised no uneasy couch, and was about to strike its mossy trunk, to dislodge any lurking reptile, when a low moaning caught his attention. The sound was so brief and unexpected, that no idea could be formed as to whether it was of human origin, or whence it proceeded: one thing was, however, certain, it was the language of feebleness and of pain.

An interval of some minutes elapsed in silence, and Laroon became suspicious, that the melancholy gloom around had cheated his fancy with an ideal coinage of the brain, when a gasping groan, of more distinct and fearful emphasis, too plainly indicated that Death was busy near at hand.

To proceed in the direction of the sound, was an impulse more natural than easily obeyed, as in the darkness it was almost impossible to avoid the rope-like coils of creeping plants that hung from tree to tree.

After a short struggle these difficulties were surmounted, and as the obscurity lessened, Laroon found himself on the confines of a green hollow glade, formed perhaps by the bed of a dried-up lagoon. This little opening was on every side embayed by dark overhanging masses of foliage, but still there was sufficient space to catch a glimpse of the deep blue starry sky beyond, and to admit a stream of moonlight, that fell athwart the

shadowy depth within, with a sort of luminous materiality, as gleams the path of the descending Angels in the wondrous picture by Rembrandt.

The full effulgence of this detached light fell as if from a mystic sympathy with the beauty it illumined, directly on an isolated corallodendron, that grew somewhat towards the further side of the glade. It was the season, when that glory of the forest reveals the pride of its bloom, and the profusion of moonlit crimson flowers, depending from every branch, and relieved by the contrast of the rich brown and velvet-like pods, from which their papilionaceous coronets as yet in virgin beauty and half developed, though gleaming with a ruby glow, had a luxuriant fascination in its aspect, which, to an individual with feelings so differently attempered, seemed the intervention of a spell.

This vision of light and beauty, so suddenly discovered, had indeed so far surprised

Laroon, that he gazed upon it for some moments from the leafy covert in which he yet remained, without discovering the object of his search, though that was equally apparent.

Immediately under the corallodendron, was one of those lonely and temporary 'inhlu,' or huts, which the Amakossæ are in the habit of assigning to the sick, when the near approach of death, according to their superstitious usage, renders it necessary for the sufferer to be banished from the 'Umzi.'

In front of the 'inhlu,' and just without the shadow of the tree, stretched on a pallet of panther hides, with features distorted by recent death-pangs, and the glazed motionless eyes gleaming fearfully in the moonlight, lay the body of the young unfortunate Dushani.

Laroon sufficiently understood the customs of the natives, to know at the first glance that the deceased had been a Chieftain, by the usual symbol, an 'Isanque,' i. e. the tail of an Elephant affixed to a pole, which was

planted in the earth, a few feet in advance of the corpse; but it was more difficult to comprehend the movements of a warrior, who had apparently been watching the deceased.

This Chieftain, whom, even then, Laroon suspected to be Makanna, having laid the hide of a Lion on the turf, and placed around it such trophies of former triumphs, in hunting and in war, as betokened superior rank and valour, now stood musing on the dead with a stern searching glance, as if he doubted the reality before him.

This mournful abstraction might have lasted longer, but for the accidental fall of some 'umkonetoes,' which had been placed to lean against the tree. With a smile of tranquil resolution, the Chieftain took up the nearest, and having ascertained the sharpness of its blade, was about to bury the steel in his bosom, when bounding forward, Laroon snatched the weapon from his grasp.

“Rash intruder!”—exclaimed Makanna, dashing aside the arm of his preserver, but with a look so mournful, that the action, violent as it was, could not offend.

“What”—replied Laroon, whose previous suspicions were now confirmed.

“Will the brave Makanna, whose name is as a locust-blight on the hearts of his enemies!—will he die self-stung in the hour of danger, as doth the scorpion?”

“Stranger,”—said the Chieftain—“look on the dead—is there not a cause for more than the grief of friendship?”

Laroon cast his eyes on the corpse with astonishment, at the alteration so brief an interval had wrought. The clear coppery complexion was exchanged for a livid paleness, tinged with green, and the whole form, before beautiful in its symmetry, was become swollen and bloated, as the carcass of a reptile rotting in the sun.

The Creole had been familiar with death

in its most terrific shapes; but there was something so hideously revolting in this spectacle, that he shuddered as he answered—

“There is more, indeed,—a cause that calls for vengeance:—This is the way that cowards murder; the ‘Inkos’ has been poisoned,—but by whom?”

“By whom!”—responded the Chieftain, with a smile of ineffable disdain—“By whom?—Go to the Amakossæ, and they will say it was Makanna.”

“But I should not believe them:—A warrior slays not as the serpent stings, in secret, and in safety.”

“It is too late—too late!”—said the Chieftain, in a bitter melancholy tone—“But yesterday! and one true gallant friend might have turned the tide of popular folly with a word!—but now, Makanna has no refuge but the grave.”

“Not so,”—replied Laroon, who perceived that he had obtained the Chieftain’s

confidence, and who felt interested in the deep emotion he betrayed.—“Not so, the Prophet Chieftain of the Amakossæ has friends, who hold their lives as nothing to his own.”

“Stranger, I have read the visages of men too long to doubt when truth stands linked with courage;—but all is now too late, before the dawn and I am with Dushani.

“Yet still there is a last bequest that I would leave the Amakossæ—or rather to their children;—the present race are all too gross, and dull of sense, for aught but those traditional dreams that rule by fear.

“It boots not now to tell thee more than that a restless boyhood made me a wanderer, and chance, or something better, taught me to note the craft, the selfishness and specious show of sounding virtues, that cheat the crowd with words—and by a solemn juggle, lay nations prostrate to the Lordship

of the few—and those, perchance, the sordid and the base.

“But this, experience taught me, too, that, as the light-grained sand, when heaped by winds together, stays the wild ocean in its spring-tide power,—so, the despised and lowly multitude, if but combined, are safe:—and, armed with fortitude, may laugh a crumbling tyranny to scorn.

“After awhile, instead of armed decks, and the green gardens of the west, I trod again the sun-parched wilderness, and saw around me, men, whom you call savages, in countless hordes, but each from each estranged, by petty feuds, and the low jealousy of rival Chiefs:—And worse than all, I saw the pale and crafty European, with smiles, bright as the steel he wears, and heart as cold, encroaching still by treacherous force, or fraudulent barter, on the free Hunting Grounds our Fathers held for ages.—The

Brown Man was but as the hound that follows on the White, repaid with kicks for service!—and, seeing this, my heart grew chill, as in a serpent's coil,—for then, there seemed no chance of retribution.

“With patience, again came hope, and then, I found a way to interlink our scattered tribes, even as a band of brothers:—and time would build them in a living wall, oppression might not dare to overleap.”

“A noble project, and one that yet may be achieved.—Then, who would choose to die, with such a spirit-stirring call to life and enterprise?”

“There is no choice,”—exclaimed Makanna, with a wild precipitancy,—“no choice, nor should there be delay:—Dushani's pale ‘ulango’ yet lingers on the confines of the dawn; and now, before the eye of day glares on the world, Makanna speeds to join him.”

The lofty enthusiasm of the answer, and

still more, the lightning flash of the Chieftain's eye, evinced a fatal obduracy of purpose; and Laroon was about again to urge the wisdom of passive endurance, when Makanna interrupted him with the impatience of one who sickens at the show of useless argument.

“It is in vain,—I have no alternative but death!—Time fleets apace, but when I hinted the proud hopes that once were nourished, I should have traced the means by which I hoped to reach them. He who would control the untamed children of the Desert, must hold alliance with the secret fears that nestle in their hearts:—those dreamy phantoms of futurity, which poor humanity is prone to worship, and which the crafty learn to shape and mould to forms and uses, that, unperceived, may give them power on, what they call, the destinies of men.

“Our native tribes, in this respect, were well prepared.—They have traditions older

than the sun; and magic rites, that blood from age to age has ratified. These were the chains that bound them to my purpose. This mystic lore,—with ignorance, the dross of folly, but with the wise, a metaphorical intelligence,—became to me the food of every thought, until my very sleep was one continued converse with the viewless forms that flit upon the midnight air, and shape our dreams into fore-shadows of realities. My nature changed, and faculties that other men may have unknowingly, in me, became potent beyond my will.

“Meanwhile, I feared to shake away the withering blight of cruel superstitions that enslaved the Amakossæ, lest, in the vanity of ignorance, they first might doubt, and then despise, the dread, mysterious influences that steel my human nerves with energies beyond the bounds of nature.

“In this I judged amiss, and fall a victim

to the blind credulity a word had once dispelled. There, colder than the clod, lies the first sacrifice of that delusion, and it hath given a drivelling crone the power, with but a lie, to dig Makanna's grave!

"The hag hath said 'twas I that poisoned him!—and the foul charge hath been approved by every evidence that pious fraud can muster, until the poor besotted crowd have no alternative, but, to believe, and slay! To-morrow, at the best, brings but a choice of torture!—for then, or right, or wrong, Dushani's death must be avenged!

"Wedged in a rifted tree, to writhe in agony, until the fierce scorching sun sucks dry the ebbing blood that trickles down its stem:—or buried to the neck, a sort of living corpse, in motionless endurance, to feel the black-ants crawl in stinging myriads on the naked head, without the power to save the bursting eyes, or clear the swarming mouth;

—and thus to live, until the brain burns into madness, with dying pangs beyond belief or fancy!

“With such a choice, say who would pause that had the nerve to strike, and held this friendly steel?”

“Escape! escape!” cried Laroon, now fully aware of the urgency of the case.—
“Escape!”

“What, shall Makanna seal his own conviction of a crime his soul abhors, and live the witness of a lie against himself?—the ant-pit or the rifted tree, were extacy to that.”

The singular paleness before noted, as common to Laroon, in circumstances of poise and difficulty, at this moment suffused his countenance. He felt, in fact, that the objection could not be questioned, or averted by an honourable mind; and if from motives of humanity, he was shocked at a catastrophe which it might be cruel to prevent, he was

also deeply mortified to find his own long cherished plan destroyed, as it were, in the very moment of fruition.

In the fortitude, the enthusiasm, and even in the superstition of Makanna, purified as it was from the brutal extravagances of vulgar credulity, he saw the elements of savage virtue. To these were united, a degree of experience, and a familiarity with the usages of civilized life, and a searching grasp of intellect, which he was before unprepared to expect; and which could only be accounted for by the youthful adventures on the ocean, and in other countries, to which the Chieftain had alluded.

Under the influence of such a man, it was probable, that something far more important than a mere political diversion against the English, at the Cape, might be effected. The wandering Hordes of Southern Africa might become united under equal laws, and perchance, the foundation of a future Empire

on the shores of the Indian Ocean might be laid.

To an imagination so sensibly alive as that of Laroon, to the most daring flights of ambition, these were golden dreams, and his mortification at their sudden dissolution was proportionably severe.

Irresolute, and dumb with vexation, he had continued passive until Makanna was again on the point of self-immolation; when, starting with a momentary thought, he snatched up the eagle plume and other war-like habiliments of the murdered Dushani, and instantly exchanging them for his own hunting dress, appeared before the astounded Chieftain, as it were, a brother-warrior, and a Kossa.

Of similar age, and still more alike in elastic grace, and symmetry of limb, the Creole, who had by this time heightened the dusky tint of his complexion, with an application of the coloured bole used by the

natives, was in form, in height, in bearing, and lineament, so precisely the counterpart of what the gallant Dushani had been, when in the prime of health and manly beauty, that Makanna trembled with emotion as he termed him, the 'Ulango,' or spirit of his friend.

"Yes," — exclaimed Laroon, to whom, after the hasty interment of the dead, the Chieftain had very candidly unfolded the certainty of a dreadful fate, if from a generous wish to save Makanna, he appeared before the people as the counterfeit of Dushani,—and failed in the attempt.

"Yes! come death!—come torture!—they shall be met, if Heaven ordain; but in this cause my heart is plumed with hopes, that mount beyond the reach of fear;—say not a word—I will not be withheld."

"Then be it so:—Makanna has a friend! —The golden eyelids of the dawn are glistening through the trees, the watch dogs bay

the cattle from the 'Kraal;' and now the warriors are assembling.

"Hark! the screeching Witch, drunk with the juice of hemlock, demands aloud the blood of brave Dushani's murderer! The withered dolt shall find, too soon, the justice that she hopes to cheat, and the black venom of her own foul heart may flow before 'tis noon!

"Hark, the Hell-kite screams more shrill and louder yet! for now my little flock of orphans, weeping, would seek their lost protector;—I hear their infant wailings on the passing breeze, and long to clasp them in my arms. The affrighted people all are gathering; and that low husky murmur speaks their discontent;—they dare not disavow the magic rites their Fathers have obeyed, and I too much have sanctioned—but they have loved me well, and now they come with tardy feet, and curse the fate that forces them along

to what they deem a necessary sacrifice of blood and torture.

“ They come !—they come !—These blazing torches flashing through the shade, are brought, as is the custom, to fire this polluted ‘ inhlu’ of the dead. Now, take a deeper breath, my gallant friend, and brace your heart-strings tight, the trial is at hand ;—speak not—I’ll keep them in obedience with a look, and plead such cause for our departure, and that without a single follower, as shall suffice.

“ If all goes well, and they believe the young Dushani lives!—their shouts will shame the thunder !—stand like a rock—they come !”

CHAPTER XI.

“ Afric is all the sun’s, and as her earth,
Her human clay is kindled, full of power,
For good or evil.”——

BYRON.

“ We can escape even now,
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.”

SHELLEY.

THE devastation that occurred on the eruption of the savage hordes of S’Lhambi is still fresh on the minds of the old settlers of Albany; and, although the formation of towns, plantations, and military posts has long since rendered it one of the most secure districts of Southern Africa, that fray is no sooner named, than the colour fades from their

cheeks, and, pointing to the ancient stains of smoke, and the cracks on their walls, they recount some horrible legend of fire and pillage.

As this marauding expedition owed its birth to the wild feelings of jealous revenge, which the unnatural league of King Gaika with the Europeans had excited, and could lead to no ultimate advantage, it had (as we have seen) from the first been discountenanced by Makanna. Anticipating the dreadful retribution it might provoke, he had too, on the setting out of S'Lhambi, displayed the omens of disaster. An eagle with a broken wing was that morning found in the 'Umzi,' and the faint querulous cries it uttered foretold, as he avowed, the dying moans of warriors in captivity.

The oxen of S'Lhambi's party ran off, too, wild and bellowing, through the woods; and it was afterwards remembered, that Makanna then said, with melancholy gesture,

“Poor beasts, they claim their liberty too soon,—another quarter of the moon, and they will have no master !”

Within that very period, the predicted defeat occurred, and the beacon fires of some distant emissaries had just revealed the fact to Makanna, on the evening when the enchantress charged him with the murder of Dushani. It was from a confidence founded on this intelligence, that the Chieftain ventured to promise Laroon, not only a speedy relief from the scrutiny of the crowd, but an immediate departure from a scene which, however managed, could not but abound in danger for them both, insomuch, as the resemblance of Laroon to Dushani, although sufficient to delude the eye for a time, could not be expected to stand the test of quiet observation.

As it was, the astonishment and admiration excited were boundless. Under the uncertain glare of torch-light, rendered still

more indistinct by murky rolling clouds of smoke, which now issued from the burning hut, as noble in bearing, as motionless and silent, as some dark masterpiece of sculptured bronze, the renovated form of the late dying Dushani stood, as it were a vision, before the people.

The malicious Witch had been the first to lead them on, but now the disappointment of the moment came like a blinding blast of lightning :—dropping her torch, and shuddering through every limb, awhile she stood absorbed, gazing on what she deemed a spectre, for she knew full well, the poison had been too deadly, to leave a chance of life. This frenzied expression of despair vanished as swiftly as it arose, and was succeeded by a change of countenance still more appalling.

In her prime, Maldrona had been distinguished, not less for majestic beauty, and masculine strength, than by malevolence of

mind; and, now, as after a gloomy day, a lurid crimson sometimes enrobes the setting sun with momentary glory, so her sunken eyes, bright with vindictive fire, dilated to a renovated show of life! The time-slackened joints were as suddenly restrung; her crouching form rose to the pristine altitude of youthful power, and her features too, losing their wan cadaverous aspect, darkened with the turgescence of passionate emotion.

For a moment, Maldrona's sparkling glances wandered proudly, as gazes the Tigress before she rends her prey, and then, with headlong spring, as bounds the viper, her wild attenuated form glanced like an arrow forward.

Another second, and a stiletto, hitherto concealed, had shed the life-blood of Makanna, but in the interval, with equal promptitude, one of the surrounding warriors, bringing his keen 'umkoneto' to a rest, received her on its point. Her onset was

made with so much violence, that more than half of the narrow lance blade protruded from beneath her shoulder, yet even when thus transfixed, she struggled for an instant forward.

On such occasions, it is the duty of each warrior of that particular horde to bear a part in the execution of the criminal, and the first blow was no sooner struck, than, closing as on a wolf at bay, the avengers thrust home their weapons at every side.

For awhile, this relentless work of butchery went on in silence;—there might be agony, but not a cry escaped. The wounded wretch still stood erect, cruelly borne up, as if in mockery, on the points of the lances, and, as her head was uninjured, perhaps consciousness remained ; at least the pale lips quivered, as with the will to speak, and awful Sardonic flashes glared from the eyes, blood-shot with pain, and bursting from their sockets.

The more distant warriors having caught the alarm, rushed furiously in, with deafening yells; but, already surrounded, Maldrona was beyond their reach, until those in the inward circle had recourse to the horrible expedient of raising her body in the air, still writhing on their weapons. A second hell-shout burst through the grove; and on the instant, a number of fresh 'umkonetos' were driven at random into her bleeding trunk. And still at intervals, convulsive twitches of the limbs bore witness to the dreadful fact that life yet lingered, and that, even to the moment, when the gore-besprinkled spearmen cast their revolting load of mangled flesh into the smouldering ruins of the half-burnt hut, and left it to the flames, then bursting out anew.

During this terrific scene, Laroon had more than once looked towards Makanna, with the view of imploring his interference, but in vain. The Chieftain evidently had

not power to restrain these, the traditional usages of his people, or thought the present time too full of peril, to render the attempt a safe one.

As the dusky crowd returned from the execution of Maldrona, Makanna (as Laroon at least imagined) betrayed a deep and fearful anxiety when their eyes met accidentally; and as the warriors, with gory weapons and savage whoops, began to form the circle of audience, the difficulty of sustaining his assumed character inspired a chill which no previous trial in his life had awakened. It was then, that he felt the value of the precaution 'not to speak:'—a single syllable had doubtless entailed a death as horrible as that of Maldrona's; and, with legions of fierce-glancing eyes, poring upon him from the dark masses of armed men on every side, while eager voices reiterated appeals of recognition, until the tone of friendly interest deepened into menace, it required no common

nerve to preserve that air of abstraction which accorded with the charm-struck silence, he had been enjoined to affect.

The ordeal was indeed severe ; but, with the patience of a martyr, Laroon maintained the same fixed attitude, until the restless curiosity of the warlike crowd broke into open turbulence, and some rash youths ventured within the sacred distance, which Makanna had taught his followers to preserve.

“Peace !” cried the Chieftain, as with indignant mien he waved them back.—“Shall the snarling whelps of the kennel beard the lion when he rouses for the combat ?—Peace !”

“Let the men of Amakossena wait, and a greater marvel shall appear !”

“Hark ! I hear his cries !—the Demon overthrown !—as, hedged around with fire, he struggles tormented in the black boiling blood of Maldrona. As long as the turmoil of his strife continues, Dushani will be as one

that is held in the charm of a dream: the poison hath yet a power, though not upon the life!—His eyes may sparkle, but behold it is no more than the glistening of the dew!—His senses are dead to knowledge, as those of him who walketh in a deep sleep!”

At this moment the fortitude of Laroon was put in no gentle requisition, as, in confirmation of his words, the Chieftain passed a flaming brand so immediately before his eyes, as almost to scorch them, while he called upon the crowd to attest their unshrinking immovability.

By good fortune, Laroon remained, to all appearance, perfectly insensible; and, convinced that he was still under the influence of a magical visitation, the curiosity of the warriors was fast changing to vague feelings of dread, and they rapidly retired to what they considered a safer distance. Meanwhile, Makanna fell into a dirge-like chant,

monotonous and indistinct, but still capable of inspiring sentiments of profound melancholy.

Ignorant of the Chieftain's ulterior object, and worn out with the irksome necessity of preserving silence, in the midst of anxiety, Laroon was about to venture on a whisper to Makanna, when his eye caught a little cloud of white smoke arising suddenly from the shadowy crags of the highest of a chain of wild hills in the distance. This object was no less observed by Makanna, whose countenance grew strangely brighter on the moment, but who immediately turned another way, as if anxious that his having noticed it should not be observed.

For awhile, the Chieftain continued in the former strain, his mournful chant of sorrow, and then suddenly raising his deep sonorous voice to the full majesty of its compass, he poured forth a succession of shouts with the vehemence of a cataract.

In a tempest-blast of answering yells and clashing weapons, the returning warriors as swiftly swarmed around him. Prepared for any enterprise of blood and peril, the dark-plumed phalanx stood in breathless eagerness, awaiting but the signal that might reveal the foe.

The day was advancing far upon the noon, and with the glowing heat was come that hushing silence of nature, that in Africa marks it as the period of repose. The breadth of sunshine descending full upon the open forest glade, dazzled and flickered before the eye, like some vast sheet of flame within the circle of a crater, while the shadows of the woody depths behind wore, from the contrast, an air of pitchy blackness, instilling ideas of stifling closeness, silence, and death.

Just on the confines of those gloomy arcades stood the Prophet Chieftain of the Amakossæ: his eyes were closed, yet not in

sleep, for the working of the features evinced feelings of fearful import; and although the arms were crossed upon the breast with all the meekness of repose, the clenchings of the hands betrayed the whirlwind of emotion raging within.

Confounded and amazed, full of anxiety, and yet not daring to seek an explanation, the savage horde still stood around in martial order, when, as if awaking from some appalling trance, the Chieftain started, and with a deep long inward shudder, continued to gaze awhile upon the earth, and then in accents of strange and feeble hollowness, as mutter indistinct the dying,—he whispered—

“The panting hounds of the ‘Macooas’ lap up the blood of our people like water! —Behold the green places of the wilderness are trampled into blackness by the red warriors of the ‘Macooas;’—their fiery ‘amahashi’ (horses) and the multitude of oxen they drive before them as a spoil;—their

thunder-speaking roars flash altogether, and our people fall in pools of their own blood, and die with their eyes open."

A burst of angry yells had expressed the indignation which this prophetic picture excited, had it not been hushed by the anxiety of learning the meaning of a low rustling sound, then arising in the forest, and which increased, until a thin dark figure of a man became visible. There was scarcely time to breathe before he was among them, and in the next moment, the exhausted stranger fell breathless at the feet of Makanna.

Although still speechless from excessive exertion, it was too evident that this was a messenger of woe. Except the kilt-like deep fringe of leathern thongs that hung from the loins, and was bound over the hips with the fearfully strained 'girdle of famine,' and worn out tattered sandals, black with the clotted blood of the feet they once defended, the man was naked, and only armed with the steel

head of a broken 'umkoneto.' By long exposure to the sun his skin was miserably chopped and seamed, while two or three undressed sword gashes on the shoulder and right arm, gave hideous proof that he had fled from the field of battle. His lips were dry and encrusted as with the sordes of the plague, and the sandy dust of the desert hung thickly around his sunk and lustreless eyes.

Although fallen, the travel-worn fugitive had not fainted, and after a little space he essayed to speak, but his feeble dry and husky utterance rendered every effort of the kind abortive, and finding words denied, he had next recourse to signs. These were apparently well understood by Makanna, and as among other less evident explanations, he began to mark out, with coloured pebbles, particular spots in the course of a river, which he had previously traced with his finger, in the sand; Laroon fancied that he saw indi-

cations of fords, and perhaps military stations. It was plain at least that Makanna not only fully understood the information which the exhausted messenger took so much labour to communicate, but that it was of a nature to afford him unexpected satisfaction. A flush of anticipated triumph suffused his countenance, and after a momentary pause, while gazing intently on the blue concave of a cloudless sky, and following with out-stretched arm the course of some object, unseen by others, in the air, he exclaimed—

“Ha! in the pavilion of the winds, from which the earth seems less than a mote, even there the gray vultures stretch their sounding pinions to the blast, and swooping downward, swift as falling stars, hasten to feast on the flesh of the mighty!—Their maws shall be heavy with the scornful eyes of the proud, and their rustling plumes wax stiff in the rank gore of the Macooas!—Lo! from the hot dust of the Karroo, vengeance shall spring

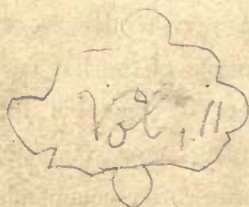
forth as a fountain, and the dawn of a new day shall beam from the caverns of darkness !”

A murmur of amazement and delight extended like the roaring of the rising tide throughout the surrounding crowd. The females hastened with anxious tenderness to succour the weary stranger, who still was crouching powerless on the earth ; and the warriors, aware that some enterprise of moment for the relief of S'Lhambi's routed followers was at hand, pressed eagerly around their chief, ready to peril life at a word.

As Makanna knew that a temporary estrangement from these rather dangerous friends, (considering the events of the last few hours), would only tend to increase his future influence ; and having now motioned them apart for the purpose, he commanded their retirement, with a mysterious intimation, that the power of the Demon on their friend Dushani could not be entirely removed, while

they continued within a conscious distance, and that the secret communication of the wounded Messenger had summoned both Dushani and himself on an immediate expedition, the nature of which it would be fatal to divulge.

END OF VOL. II.



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